

Investigation of Theories Supporting Engagement of Resistant Learners
in Formal Academic Settings and Curriculum

Sherilyn Lehn, B.F.A., B.Ed.

Department of Graduate and Undergraduate
Studies in Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

Faculty of Education, Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario

© Sherilyn Lehn 2016

Abstract

This study sought to explore ways to work with a group of young people through an arts-based approach to the teaching of literacy. Through the research, the author integrated her own reflexivity applying arts methods over the past decade. The author's past experiences were strongly informed by theories such as caring theory and maternal pedagogy, which also informed the research design. The study incorporated qualitative data collection instruments comprising interviews, journals, sketches, artifacts, and teacher field notes. Data were collected by 3 student participants for the duration of the research. Study results provide educators with data on the impact of creating informal and alternative ways to teach literacy and maintain student engagement with resistant learners.

Acknowledgements

The completion of my Master of Education degree is one of the most arduous tasks I have ever accomplished. As I near completion, I am considering some people who have supported me in this achievement. First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my mother, Florence Grimm, and my daughter, Emily Vullings, for always offering me support and encouragement. As well, I would like to thank my boyfriend, Ron Buchholz, who is a constant support and a source of strength for all my endeavours. Especially, I offer my gratitude to Dr. Jennifer Rowsell, my tireless academic supervisor, who was always there for me and continually guided me through the uncharted waters of my research. She taught me so much about becoming a scholar and shared vast amounts of knowledge and resources with me. I also wish to thank Dr. Dolana Mogadime for her support as second reader and am grateful particularly for her great critical eye and guidance in the development my research paper. Finally, I would like to thank my student participants since they voluntarily chose to be an integral part of my research and findings.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Figures	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Draw Port.....	1
Researcher Reflexivity	8
Statement of the Problem	12
Purpose of the Study.....	15
Research Questions	17
Theoretical Framework	17
Arts-Informed Research	18
Relevance of Arts-Based Research to This Project	19
What Is A/R/tography? And Why Is This Project not an Example of A/R/tography?.....	20
Rationale.....	20
Scope and Limitations of the Study.....	29
Identification of Bias	30
Outline of the Remainder of the Document	32
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	35
Culture of Poverty	35
Narrative Theory: Autobiography	36
Willis: Anti-School Subculture	38
Hegemonic Dominance Through Language (Literacy).....	40
Hegemonic Hurdles in Education.....	41
Funds of Knowledge.....	42
School-to-Prison Pipeline.....	44
Literacy and Community	48
The Power of Love in Education: Maternal Pedagogy and Caring Theory	51
Schoolhome Theory.....	57
Nature and Alternative Nurturing Spaces for Learning	60
Chapter Summary	62
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN	63
Action Research.....	64
Dialectic Action Research Spiral.....	66
Interviews	66
Narrative	66
Phenomenology	67

Site and Participant Selection	71
Ethics	72
Gaining Consent	74
Data Collection	74
Data Analysis.....	74
Research Design	75
Literacy Labyrinth Implementation.....	76
Ethical Considerations	77
Grounded Theory.....	78
Conclusion	79
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS	83
Data Collection Process.....	83
Wesley	85
Wesley’s Art Experience	88
Isaac	92
Isaac’s Art Experience.....	97
Kristina	99
Kristina’s Art Experience	101
Conclusion: Arts-Based Literacy	109
CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH	112
Trail Markers (Turning Points)	112
Death and Rebirth.....	117
Sacred Spiral and Sacred Geometry	126
Conclusion and Implications	131
Successes and Challenges.....	145
Main Research Question: What Are the Experiences of Marginalized Youth in an Arts-based Literacy Project?	152
Research Sub-Question 1: How Does Community Play a Role in This Project?	153
Research Sub-Question 2: In What Ways Does My Reflexivity as a Visual Arts Teacher and My Work With Marginalized Youth Play a Role in the Research?	154
References	157
Appendix A: Trail Markers: Lesson Plan	165
Appendix B: Trail Markers: PowerPoint (Resource for Lesson).....	168
Appendix C: Paragraph Writing Resource	170
Appendix D: Lesson Plan: Death and Rebirth.....	171
Appendix E: Death and Rebirth Power Point (Resource for Lesson).....	175
Appendix F: Lesson Plan: Sacred Geometry and Golden Mean	178
Appendix G: Exit Interview Questions	181

List of Figures

Figure	Page
1. 7-circuit Chartres labyrinth design	4
2. Diagram of a dialectic action research spiral	68
3. Collaborative word-web	84
4. Wesley's culminating art piece	89
5. Sample of Isaac's early written responses.....	96
6. Isaac's culminating art piece	98
7. Kristina's culminating art piece	102
8. Wesley's word-web.....	114
9. Labyrinth: Walking in	119
10. Labyrinth: Walking out	120
11. Isaac's writing response	123
12. Kristina's writing response.....	125

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Research pursued in this thesis examines how youth can develop a deeper appreciation for their immediate environment by creating a work of art in their community and keeping a journal to write down their thoughts and reflections. Building on research across the areas of multimodality (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010), community regeneration (Kinloch, 2007), and arts integration (Eisner, 2001), I will explore ways to educate students who do not embrace formal education for a variety of reasons. I was offered space at Helping Hands¹ (a pseudonym for a non-profit community support centre) as the location to teach arts-based literacy and construct our proposed labyrinth project. Secondary students involved in the research attend the Literacy Labyrinth project outside of school hours and although they have many interests and competencies outside of school, they feel marginalized from public schooling. These students are often excluded from the classroom and often because of low cultural capital that gives them little chance to succeed. Cultural capital is a term coined by Bourdieu which implies adaptive cultural and social competencies such as familiarity with relevant institutional contexts, processes, and expectations, possession of relevant intellectual and social skills has much to do with the power and status [thus opportunities for success and advancement] of an individual in society. (As cited in Egerton & Roberts, 2014, p. 196)

Draw Port

Draw Port was a booming and economically viable place to live up until the 1990s. Most employment was factories based in the production of steel products or tractor parts. Some of the major industrial companies included Atlas Steel, John Deere,

¹ Pseudonyms are used throughout this document to maintain confidentiality.

Union Carbide, and Steel Town Tubes, among many others. Since 1990, many families still support the resistance to formal education and do not encourage youth to embrace higher learning. The results are that Draw Port is presently an impoverished community that faces all of the issues of low socio-economics. Many families are supported directly through government assistance or have very low-paying jobs. Many of the youth are enamoured of deviant ways of earning a living such as drugs, theft, or other illegal activities.

Many of the students who do not follow or embrace mainstream educational methods become marginalized within the school system. Marginalization is “when any groups are systematically excluded from meaningful participation and achieve below their levels of competence, they become both ‘marginalized’ in their current school environments and economically and socially disadvantaged over their lifetimes” (Tilleczek, Furlong, & Ferguson, 2010, para. 1). I find it increasingly important to create learning environments for students such as these so that they may have meaningful lives as positive members of our society. As it stands, marginalized “young people who are underachieving, whose non-involvement is increasing, who are bored with school and especially against those who spend more and more time without adult supervision” (Coussée, Roets, & De Bie, 2009, p.425) could be at risk for lives that may lead to marginalization as adults.

Applying my own reflexivity and background working with marginalized youth, I completed an 8-week project in which students designed and create plans for a permanent art installation (a labyrinth to be specific) in a public garden. I chose the labyrinth design for many reasons. Firstly, the labyrinth is a great starting point to inspire creativity and

imagination. I also find the symbolism connected to the labyrinth a great metaphor for students who want to change their life path. The purpose of the study is to become aware of the social implications of including this population of student into the community in positive ways. Yet another goal for the research is also to investigate exploratory ways of delivering lessons through an artistic, multimodal lens.

The labyrinth was chosen as a project in which students will experience a physical product that was a result of 8 weeks of literacy, art-making, and discussions. Building the labyrinth was a metaphor for the path the student participants were creating for themselves. The original plan for this project was that students would learn about labyrinths through reading art history articles and exploring themes that made labyrinths relevant in many cultures and spiritual groups. This was my explanation for using the labyrinth as a mode to teach literacy. Although the final project was planned to build the labyrinth as a community initiative, there were complications with the administration of Helping Hands. They subsequently changed their plan to build a permanent structure when the lessons were nearly finished. So, the research is based solely on the study and artwork based on labyrinths and student participation during classes. Figure 1 shows an example of a labyrinth (a 7-circuit Chartres labyrinth design).



Figure 1. 7-circuit Chartres labyrinth design. This diagram is a visual depiction and inspiration for the labyrinth. Students are encouraged to choose their design collaboratively.

In teachers' college, I was influenced by a professor who had the class create lessons from all disciplines based on the "Learning Garden." This was a prototype educational garden where the professor, Veronica Gaylie, based all learning in an outdoor environment. Since then, I have been very interested in developing and researching alternative ways to create curriculum that involves a natural environment.

The Chartres design shown in Figure 1 was chosen as a starting point to intrigue and inspire students to become involved in the project. The labyrinth was an idea that I had pondered for quite some time since I consider the structure could be used by many professionals such as educators, therapists, doctors, and could be accessed by students or the community at large to encourage participation and curiosity. As a permanent structure, I envisioned an interactive earthwork that would benefit many people in the community and allow students to make an impact on creating a historical marker. As a visual arts teacher, I see the value of the aesthetics through the teaching of elements and principles of design. I also can teach the art history aspect and make connections to philosophical, spiritual, cultural, as well as other academic disciplines. Because it is an outdoor structure, the students would be exposed to an alternative learning environment and perhaps learn or experience lessons in a different way.

The fact that there are members of the community helping to build the labyrinth and that it is meant to be shared with others is a metaphor for the interdependency that these students have with one another and their community. The reflections through writing and discussions are a focus for students to become aware of the process for themselves and whether they acknowledge this metaphor as true for themselves.

As part of the study of labyrinths in an art history sense, student participants

learned about what a labyrinth is structurally, along with the history and development of labyrinths throughout time. I introduced themes such as death and rebirth to create metaphors and connections to transitions and change in their lives and how a labyrinth may facilitate assisting others to recognize beginnings and endings. Student participants focused on Draw Port, a pseudonym for the town where the research takes place. They were encouraged to critically consider their hometown and the community and discuss their own feelings and opinions about change needed or that has happened within the town.

As an art teacher, I am always passionate about showing a new way to look at the world, so I also taught students about Sacred Geometry and Golden Mean and had students draw connections to the labyrinth and the parallels to nature and the universe. Student participants created some artwork as a way to become involved in a visual and kinesthetic way with this art form.

Being physically involved in creating the labyrinth after learning about the history and some different art forms had hopefully made the experience of participation significantly more meaningful to the student participants. Although I did not direct the students to conclude that their experience was meaningful, I requested that they write and journal about the way it is influencing their lives.

As a meditative tool, the labyrinth was a great vehicle for looking within and discovering personal and universal truths. I hoped that the students would discover some innate truths about education, community, and/or themselves while studying, planning, and building the labyrinth. In any case, the labyrinth may be a tool for questioning and discovering new ideas from a different perspective.

As a formal visual arts project, studying themes, the labyrinth was a vehicle to investigate death and rebirth, fertility, and idealistic art forms such as the Golden Mean and Sacred Geometry. This assisted students to appreciate and understand the existence of the labyrinth with more insight. The theme of death and rebirth had a deeper implication than just physical death and rebirth. It was a way of reflecting on change; endings and beginnings. By the studying the labyrinth, the students had an opportunity to reflect on change or aspire to effectuate change in their lives. With regards to the metaphor, I allowed students to interpret the theme of death and rebirth on their own and try not to make too much of an influence as to their interpretation of the theme.

Every session had students questioning the value of literacy in regards to gaining deeper insight to the study of labyrinths. All lesson plans were considered emerging designs and although considered a starting point, the lesson plans were considered organic and changed depending on the needs and interests of the student participants.

Once Helping Hands had changed its plan about allowing my students to build the labyrinth, it became difficult to contact the organization. At first there were a lot of issues with who was actually in charge of the labyrinth project. Since this was my research, much of the control had to stay within the realm of my command. For example, one of the administrative staff insisted that she would host a new-age meditation with my students. This was not part of the research and I would need additional approval from each student's parents and also from the Brock University Research Ethics Board. Eventually, Helping Hands did not respond to any phone calls or emails. My academic supervisor finally became involved and offered to call the chief administrator of Helping

Hands. She discussed the issue with the latter individual and we had a meeting. During the meeting, it was disclosed that Helping Hands had decided not to support the project.

Helping Hands had initially insisted when I was first approved for the project that I fund the project solely on my own, and recruit my own students and volunteers. There was an outstanding amount of \$1,500 of donation money from corporate grants and a local business, so the chief administrator offered a small patch of land (about 10'x 10') at the back of the property behind the parking lot to create some sort of labyrinth-based permanent structure to complete my research project. When I tried to contact the person in charge of allowing me to move forward on this secondary choice, she did not respond to any of my phone calls or emails. I tried to contact the chief administrator again several times and he did not respond either. Since it was late in the season, I had to concede that the project would not happen during the timeline I have budgeted for the written components of my Master of Education program. So, the project changed from learning, planning, and implementing to learning and planning. Hopefully, implementation of the labyrinth construction will happen sometime in the future, but not during my research.

Researcher Reflexivity

After receiving my Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of British Columbia – Okanagan, I found that the teaching profession had been saturated in the Okanagan Valley. I searched nationwide and landed a job in a school on an Indian Reserve in northern Ontario. My first day as a professional teacher, I showed up to the school where a student had committed suicide only a few hours before my arrival. So, on my first day I was thrown into community crisis meetings where I assisted in planning and organizing how best to help the students and the community at large with the tragedy that had

occurred. During my time teaching on the reserve, I learned a lot about how to be a teacher, with regards to following the rules and regulations. For example, government curriculum expectations had to be met, so there was always pressure to move on with curriculum even if students needed more time to understand concepts. In a Block System of education, semesters were only 6 weeks in length. Students were considered withdrawn if they missed more than five classes. There were no exceptions for hunting season, illnesses, deaths, or issues of child care. Either the student was present and accounted for or the student was absent. Many students did not have a safe place to go and if sent away, they often would not return for weeks. This meant they were absent for more than 5 days and would be automatically withdrawn from the course. It was a spiral effect and inefficient at offering opportunities to students who did not fit the mold of the dominant society. Often the rules were not designed for what was best for my students' development both with their academics and social health. So, often I would bend or quietly break the rules that seemed not to make sense or created too many restrictions for their development.

After having arrived at this community, I discovered that the students were a product of generational experiences of tragedies from oppression asserted mainly by the White governing population. Although I did read and learn in a theoretical and sterile way about social and political issues with First Nations people, to personally interact with the effects and hear of the tragedies inflicted on their community was quite a different level of learning for me. The community itself had been physically moved so that a hydro dam could be built. The traditional lands where ceremonies, hunting, and other important activities occurred were flooded. I overheard elders say that the flooding caused the

coffins in the cemetery to float to the surface, and the bodies of their ancestors had to be reburied in a new location. The location where this community was relocated was not a suitable or sustainable place to live. There was much resentment to the government for this relocation and it caused a lot of hardship. The flooding caused mercury to leech out of the rocks and many people suffered from mercury poisoning:

Between 1962 and 1970, an alkaline chlorine plant located near Dryden, Ontario, Canada, dumped approximately 10 metric tonnes of inorganic mercury into the English–Wabigoon river system. This mercury was converted to the toxic methylated form by sulfide reducing bacteria in the water, and was subsequently incorporated into the river ecosystem. (Kinghorn, Solomon, & Chan, 2007, p.615)

The fish and all the other traditional ways of gathering food were tainted by mercury.

This caused widespread illness, and problems with obtaining clean, healthy water.

The other major issue for these people was the oppression caused by the White population imposing western education and parental rules on the families. There was a history of residential schooling, and because of the conversion of some people to Christianity and especially Catholicism, there was a spiritual rift amongst the community. The whole issue of residential school caused much of the violence and dysfunctionality, both as a community and within family units. There was also “the Scoop” in the 1960s, where the government (social services) had come onto the reserve with school buses and apprehended every Ojibway child and took them away to be fostered out to White families. “Elders from the Wabaseemoong First Nation in north-western Ontario still recount the bus that drove around their reserve picking up children and shuttling them to a waiting plane for a 345 kilometre flight north to Sandy Lake” (Alaca, Anglin, &

Thomas, 2015, p. 5). Many families completely lost touch with their children altogether because the government would not tell where the children had been relocated. So, the community to which I had moved across Canada to begin my career as a teacher had little or no trust in any White person coming to their reserve to “help.”

Beginning my career with such a tragedy truly reinforced a strong conviction to always care for and nurture my students. Although the government has compulsory curriculum expectations, I developed a maternal pedagogist’s standpoint as far as teaching and interacting with my students: “In mothering, we hone our empathetic abilities; learn to understand the vulnerability in others without profiting from it. The experience of mothering teaches people how to be more emotionally and intellectually nurturant, how to take care of each other” (O’Reilly, 2007, p. 405). Without taking into account the students’ community and cultural history, and the tragedy that had occurred, a teacher with less sensitivity would have taught the course with no consideration to the students’ ability to cope or recover from the violence and tragedy that had happened so that they could do the coursework.

When I moved to the Niagara region after teaching on the First Nations Indian Reserve in northern Ontario, I was completely convinced that many of the marginalized students’ behaviours and attitudes about education were a direct result of living in low socio-economic conditions more so than their cultural heritage and long-standing history with Western educational systems. I was hired by the Draw Port Neighbourhood Project, a grassroots non-profit group that worked collectively on supporting the marginalized low-literacy, low socio-economic populations of Draw Port, Ontario. The project focused mainly on students and offering literacy, health, and social opportunities to them. As an

English teacher and visual arts teacher, I am always interested in engaging students in literacy through using the arts as the vehicle. The community at the time of my hiring was under siege of local youths vandalizing through graffiti all public spaces. I offered to develop an arts-based literacy workshop for some of the youth who had been identified as members of the local vandals. From my experience on the reserve, I discovered that many of the observations and teaching strategies I used to create successes with my students would work as well with the students of Draw Port even though they come from a different cultural base. As I worked with the Draw Port students, teachers would ask me how I could turn these resistant, marginalized students into engaged and interested students. I did not have any theoretical referencing to answer and often was only able to share from an intuitional standpoint. The main reason I enrolled in my Master of Education program was to be able to share these strategies with other teachers and have a theoretical framework from which other professionals may be able to build upon.

Statement of the Problem

With such reflexivity as a background to this research, I would like to find ways to apply the arts in a respectful way to inform pedagogy applied to a project with marginalized youth. It is crucial that students learn literacy skills in a way that influences the value of learning the skills. By using the arts and becoming involved with community, students will appreciate and develop a deeper understanding through experiential knowledge. In this study, I combined arts with literacy culminating with a painted art piece where in which each student would plan their labyrinth for community interaction to meet the goals set for this group of students.

The development of the statement of the problem was rooted from my own experiences teaching students from the reserve and later on during the Graffiti Peace Project. The specific problem I found was that the teaching environment and the administrative rules around teaching certain populations of students was too restrictive and not flexible enough to meet the students' needs. There seemed to be a lack of consideration of the issues of students in a low socio-economic status. For instance, on the reserve, I had many students who had been to court and spent time in juvenile detention or jail. This changes how they view life, school, institutions, and teacher or authority figures as a whole. One student in particular was 17 and had spent time in adult jail. He was very angry, detached from lessons, had little respect or regard for myself as the teacher, and would come to school daily either drunk or quite hung over from the night before. Officially, I was supposed to send him home because his choices were not supported by the school or Ministry standards. I chose to keep him in the class and discuss his behaviour and choices with him daily. He began to make changes in his behaviour and by the end of the course he was very interested in his studies.

There was an English class that I taught where 12 of the 15 students were all males and were all the most behaviourally challenged students in the grade 9 student cohort. I never sent students to the principal throughout this course. In previous courses, I learned that if I did so, they would not go to the principal and then basically, I lost them for the semester. I wanted them to stay present in class and learn. To create a positive result with these students, I connected with their values which was more physical than academic. I moved the desks around to change the structure of the class and brought in a big mat from the gym. I chunked the lessons between push-up challenges. My students

were extremely motivated to complete their academic assignments so that they would have a chance to conquer their teacher in a physical challenge. This offset their feelings of low confidence with regards to low literacy skills. The boys were very motivated and engaged to win this challenge against the teacher (me). The students made the rules; one of their push-ups was equal to 2 of mine. We gained a truce when I finally reached 318 push-ups and the strongest, most able student acquiesced and admitted defeat. Another thing I realized is that these boys were doing a lot of drinking and drugs during the night and not sleeping properly. I predicted that their behaviour would improve if they were sober and took better care of their bodies. So I started an MMA fitness conditioning class. All the exercises were weight-lifting and conditioning drills, but made to be hard core like the conditioning that was performed by the top UFC fighters that they admired. Students were allowed to come 3 days per week after school, but the requirement was that they must be sober to participate. The students spent their evenings exercising, and afterwards were tired, and apparently slept well and had much better behaviour during the day in class. By the end of the semester, I had the students' respect and they were all engaged in learning in the classroom.

Students I worked with on the reserve were very apathetic to succeeding academically or setting goals to apply their knowledge in the future. Their response was "this is the reserve." So, they did not believe that they had a chance. When I moved to Draw Port and worked with the young graffiti vandals, their response to learning and succeeding in school was "this is Draw Port, no one gets anywhere in this town." While reading bell hooks (2003), I discovered that she came across the same problem. She had experienced "for example: A really hardworking gifted student doing excellent work

simply stop attending class in the last few weeks” (hooks, 2003, p.18). Students from low socio-economic communities would self-sabotage due to low self-esteem. Skipping school, low attendance, not participating or doing homework because of the fact they may have to contend with the next step if they pass the course is terrifying for students who have had a reality of no opportunities.

Although I have many more examples of situations such as these, if I would have responded or followed the expectations of the Ministry, or taught in a way that was formal or asserted my authority over the students, there would have been fewer students completing the courses. I discovered that by disciplining students and sending them away from class either for behaviour or because of poor personal choices, that students lost out on their education. I found that if I were to hone my classroom management skills and teach in a flexible way, I could engage the students who attended my classes. I also noticed that some students were excluded from an education because of their responsibilities or home environment. By being flexible and offering options to students, they were able to continue with their studies and move forward in the educational system.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore ways to educate students who do not embrace formal education regularly. In doing so, I will share some of my teaching stories. The stories will exemplify the reasons I chose to teach in an alternative way and how this directed me to philosophies such as caring theory, and maternal pedagogy. By adopting alternative methods, I could connect and influence my students in ways that I could not do when following standard protocol. These students are often excluded from the classroom and often because of low cultural capital have little impact on the change

required to create successes. The purpose of the study is also to become aware of the social implications of including students into community in positive ways. Lastly, the purpose is also to investigate exploratory ways to deliver lessons especially through using the arts as a vehicle to teach literacy.

The research sessions with student participants occurred once a week for 2 hours on site at the Helping Hands centre. The “classes” began as a structured classroom setting and each week, the structure became less formal and allowed student participants to learn and respond in an individualized exploratory setting. The classes were planned to occur both indoors and outdoors. Although there is a structured outline of lessons and activities, the plan should be considered an emerging design and was completely organic and flexible to the student participants’ needs and interests.

Although the classes were physically unstructured, each class began with a theme. The themes were starting points that encouraged students to think more critically or have deeper insight in an art historical or philosophical perspective of labyrinths. For example, in the fourth class we focused on *Sacred and Universal Shapes and Images* and related that to the structure and design of labyrinths. Students were encouraged to explore that theme as well as a variety of others and offered insight based on their own interpretations, experiences, and comfort levels of risk-taking. Another part of the structure was an arts-literacy based project involving reading and writing responses. The last 10 minutes of the 2-hour session always commenced with students participating in field notes or responding to the facilitator’s end prompts.

Students had opportunities to work independently and in groups. There were group discussions, and informal times for students to discuss and respond to the activities

amongst themselves. This project ended with students painting a plan of a way community could interact with a labyrinth. There was due care and diligence to respect the anonymity of the student participants.

To conduct this research, I taught four sessions (or until completion of project), keep a research journal, and interview students prior to the project and then again after completion of the project. I will also be analyzing and comparing themes by following Creswell's (2012, 2015) method of phenomenological research, and relay information formally through this structure.

Research Questions

The following research question framed this qualitative study: What are the experiences of marginalized youth in an arts-based literacy project? My investigation also sought to answer two research sub-questions: How does community play a role in this project? In what ways does my reflexivity as a visual arts teacher and my work with marginalized youth play a role in the research?

Theoretical Framework

This study contains five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the introduction, background to the study, rationale, and theoretical framework. Chapter 2 discusses research methods and design, and research questions. Research ethics will also be discussed and analyzed in chapter 2. Chapter 3 includes an introduction and in-depth examination and review of literature that reveals the theoretical and philosophical influences that formed the framework of my research.

The final two chapters will discuss the effects of my study with the influences of philosophical and theoretical perspectives. In chapter 4, I will discuss the results of my

project. The chapter includes a discussion of the narratives and data collection as well as the unexpected occurrences that may have affected the outcome of the project. Chapter 5 summarizes and emphasizes the important points of this research. I will conclude with a discussion of implications and recommendations for future similar projects.

Arts-Informed Research

An arts-informed inquiry is usually implemented with the researcher being immersed in qualitative research methods. Ideas bring “together the systematic and rigorous qualities of conventional qualitative methodologies with the artistic, disciplined, and imaginative qualities of the arts acknowledges the power of art forms to reach diverse audiences and the importance of diverse languages for gaining insights into the complexities of the human condition (Knowles & Cole, 2008, p. 59). There was an exciting aspect for students to have experiential learning by building a labyrinth after studying the art form and art historical aspects of this earthwork. The culminating activity was not the result of the learning, but a physical way to integrate all that has been learned as well as creating new perspectives by being involved in the process of a permanent structure in the participants’ community. Understanding the art form moves from theoretical to practical. The students did not have this opportunity since Helping Hands denied continuance of the physical building of the labyrinth on their property. The project moved to a planning stage instead.

In considering the space, I specifically wanted it to be accessible for as many people in the community as possible. Rather than a destination, where one may need access to a vehicle, or make a special trip to experience it, I wanted it to be part of the cityscape. In this way, it becomes part of the community and can be experienced in many different ways

depending on the way citizens want to become involved with it. The idea of youths making an interactive permanent artwork inspired me to create especially accessibility to the elderly and other vulnerable members of the community. As stated earlier, the project became a learning and planning project rather than actually implementing the construction of the labyrinth.

Relevance of Arts-Based Research to This Project

Much of this research was based on students learning about art and art history and then creating connections through literacy, either by reading or writing about the theme based on labyrinths and discovering insights about themselves or their community. I collected samples of the work they did. This included journals, video recordings of in-class conversations, art work, and any other artifacts of their work. The classes were designed implicitly to create structure, predictability, and encourage collaboration. The class structure of lessons were conducted by: all students discussing the theme of the class as a group, a lecture or lesson about the theme, a hands-on art component, a snack and drink, and then a major literacy section where students came to their own conclusion or made connections and insights to the theme. Without the arts component, many students would not likely have been as engaged. The hands-on art allowed students to be creative with and break down the classroom structure of formality. The space was designed for students to make art rather than merely being an academic setting. The studio environment was an alternative learning space that most students do not recognize as an academic learning space. This was an opportunity to allow students to participate in activities that they may not necessarily do in a regular classroom setting. The space became a collaborative environment. It “was informed by these experiences and the

realization that if a person stays with the creative process, will generate unexpected results, the value of which are sometimes even proportionate to the degree of struggle” (Knowles et al., 2008, 39) Some risk-taking activities that students would partake in would be to participate verbally, debate, and discuss or share with the group their point of view. The culminating activity, to create a labyrinth, will bring together all the ideas about art, community, and literacy. Constructing the labyrinth as part of the research project will take many of the previous lessons shift from theoretical to practical knowledge. Although they did not actually, build a labyrinth, they had very diverse ways in which they would plan and implement a labyrinth for their community.

What Is A/R/tography? And Why Is This Project not an Example of A/R/tography?

A/R/tography “renders research inquiries through artistic means” (Irwin, 2004, p. 1, as cited in “The A/r/tographic Trail,” n.d., para. 1). To practice A/R/tography “is to inquire into a phenomenon through an ongoing process of art making and writing while acknowledging one’s role as artist (A), researcher (R), teacher (T)” (Irwin, 2004, p. 1, as cited in “The A/r/tographic Trail,” n.d., para. 1). Although there are the aspects of acknowledgement of Artist, Researcher, and Teacher, this arts-based research project has other important aspects involved in its design. Firstly, there was the important aspect of literacy that influences and is also conversely influenced by art. Also, another aspect is the influence of youth social activism and participation and interaction with community through the planning and construction of this project.

Rationale

When students are denied an education as a form of discipline, that is an injustice to the student. As an educator, I notice that there is much rhetoric about inclusion and

developing curriculum to support marginalized youth. For instance, the Ontario Ministry of Education's (2014) *Achieving Excellence: a Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* supports equity of education for students who may be marginalized; it states: "It is particularly important to provide the best possible learning opportunities and supports for students who may be at risk of not succeeding" (p. 8). Often however, when dealing with challenging students, it seems acceptable by most educational standards to send them out of the classroom, suspend or expel them, and otherwise redirect them away from learning as perceived as a most effective way to deal with bad behaviour. When educators recognize themselves as members of our society and acknowledge the responsibility of influencing our youth to become good citizens, they contribute to building better communities for the future.

My first attempt to implement my research project became a pilot project: Project Helping Hands. I was working with multiple agencies that all had their own criteria of the results of the labyrinth project. I had to juggle my own objectives with that of my professor, the university, the Brock University Research Ethics Board (REB certificate number 14-179-ROWSELL), and Helping Hands. This was the most multi-leveled community project I have ever been involved in. The project failed because Helping Hands eventually decided that it did not want a long-term commitment to maintain the labyrinth. The other reason was that it took the university REB too long to approve the construction, though the delay in approval from the university REB effectually didn't matter much after Helping Hands had decided against the project. So, because I did not have a culminating project as planned, Helping Hands became a pilot project and I had to regroup and redesign my final research project.

While working with students during my pilot project, I would put the students in a position where they had to take ownership of the class. That is, that my goal was to eventually release my power of the project to them. It would have been a great experience in leadership, decision-making, and team-building. From my experiences teaching on the reserve, I found most students felt powerless. Since then, I have always tried to encourage students to recognize their own power and as classes move forward, I would slowly release my power so they could practice being within their own authority. Discussing consequences in decision-making assists students who are often disciplined or excluded from education because of behaviour.

The pilot project acted as a catalyst to my final research project. The classes helped to develop a base of understanding with regards to the art and art history of labyrinths. Students investigated themes of labyrinths and how labyrinths have been used by various religious and ethnic communities throughout the world. The students also built a rapport amongst each other which helped to create the cohesive group for the second session which was my formal research. The disappointment was too much for some of the students and they did not return a second time. The positive aspect of this was that I needed to have only two or three participants from whom to collect data, and this helped with the selection process.

The marginalization of my group of students was quite varied. One student, Tara, is Muslim and of Lebanese descent. She has had some challenges in balancing her traditional Muslim home and family with the pressure to conform in a Western (Canadian) school. Although very bright and with much academic ability, her choices often reflected that of her peers and she chose activities of other students who resisted

formal education. There are two siblings, Kristina and Isaac, who live in a lower socio-economic neighbourhood and are both very good behaviourally. Kristina has great potential, but does not apply herself as much as she could; the other sibling, Isaac, resists formal education and has low literacy and is in need of intervention. I would suggest that the marginalization of these two students is essentially that they live in an area where much of their influences are from peers with low socio-economic status and little or no postsecondary education. The norm of the neighbourhood is not setting postsecondary goals.

Another student, Wesley, moved to Canada from Pennsylvania, USA. His stepfather is Muslim and his mother is Catholic Filipino. He has a strong resistance to formal education and is remedial in literacy skills. Both of his parents are highly educated, but in Wesley's formative years, he had challenges. He disclosed that in Pennsylvania, attending school was a survival of violence since the schools were extremely volatile. His focus was on avoiding violence rather than learning foundational literacy skills. This student is very capable, but needs support and now confidence to succeed. When he first began to attend, Wesley was focused on ethnicity and race, often discussing and identifying these differences. It indicated to me that his school in Pennsylvania may have had racial or ethnic tensions. Those tensions may be a carry over to his school reality now.

Another student, Isabelle, who was remedial in literacy, insisted on participating in this project. She is the only student who comes from a highly affluent family that has a lot of cultural capital and power to influence change in the community. I resisted letting her join in because she did not fit the low socio-economic and low cultural capital

standing. I finally allowed her to be involved because she did have a lot of literacy issues and her marginalization was often because she was not accountable for her own success. She also had a lot of challenges with literacy which was based on lack of confidence and fear of looking wrong to peers or the community at large. She brought a friend (Tracy) along for every session, and although she was a pleasure to have in the group, Tracy was neither resistant to formal education nor marginalized in any way. The friend was a support mechanism for safety with the risk taking or unknown activities that would transpire throughout the project. Marginalization comes in varying ways, but for the most part when a student is not given opportunity to succeed, then the risk of deviancy is a reality.

Of the six students who attended the Helping Hands pilot project, only Kristina, Isaac, and Wesley returned for the research. As stated earlier, the disappointment of being denied after the approval to build had already been set in place was too great for most students. They felt defeated at the end of the pilot project. On the first day of meeting at the formal research project, I asked the students to journal about the events that took place during the pilot project. The main question to them was what it means to be returning to something they had thought had been concluded. These are some Kristina's reflections on the Helping Hands pilot project.

When I found out it was cancelled I was mad and confused at the same time. A lot of hard work went down the drain! I am extremely happy to be able to come back here to continue. I have a better outlook on what we are doing. I couldn't stop thinking about what happened because we were kind of left hanging on this. I am

super grateful to be back with this group. It is easier to be here now that I know everyone here and am more familiar with the topic. (Kristina)

Surprisingly to me, the students who did return did not come for the labyrinth project; they returned because they enjoyed the classes I developed and they enjoyed the company of their peers.

From the literature I have read by Bill Ayers (1997) and other theorists (e.g., Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005) bringing about awareness of the school-to-prison pipeline, I found that it is imperative to stop streamlining groups of marginalized youths to become future prison inmates and members of the infrastructure for corrections. Interestingly, rather than focusing on race and ethnicity, most of the research that I have found on the school-to-prison pipeline was based on socio-economic standing and social status. The following is Christle et al.'s (2005) criteria to conduct research:

A correlation analysis was performed using the following 14 school characteristics to examine their relationship with the academic achievement variable: (a) number of students enrolled; (b) attendance rate; (c) number of absences; (d) socioeconomic background of the students, measured by the percentage of students enrolled in the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program (FRLP); (e) number of suspensions; (f) number of expulsions; (g) number of students assigned to alternative placements; (h) number of board violations, as measured by the number of student behaviors that resulted in an administrative referral and consequence (e.g., defiance of authority); (i) number of law violations, as measured by the number of illegal acts (e.g., burglary) committed by students on school grounds or at school-related activities that may result in

arrest and result in suspension, expulsion, or alternative placement; (j) the number of students receiving corporal punishment; (k) mean Reading NCE on the CTBS; (l) mean Math NCE on the CTBS; (m) mean Language NCE on the CTBS; and (n) retention rate, as measured by the percentage of students held back in a prior grade. Analysis of data collected in Stage 1 identified the variables that were related to student achievement in Kentucky elementary schools. (p. 79)

Although, race and ethnicity may play some part in the School to Prison Pipeline, social class seemed to be more of an issue and was the focus of most studies with this theory. The prevention of the school to prison pipeline was possible and these youths could rather use their lives to benefit our society rather than become a detriment (Ayers, 1997). According to Ayers (1997), the number of prisons and the infrastructure to support it such as jobs and services to maintain are continually growing. The prison system is beginning to become an economic enterprise. Only the waste of human life is costly to our society.

Prevention of marginalized students from being enticed into anti-societal behaviour and ultimately streamlined into the prison and correctional system is crucial. Introducing alternative methods of teaching students and considering other options to discipline can help students to integrate and be a positive force in society. If marginalized students are taught in ways that are non-threatening, and are engaging, they will continue to remain included in the community and ultimately are offered an opportunity to be a positive member of society. Creative Problem Solving (CPS) (McClusky et. al., 2005) is a program that has been used in Canada as an alternative way to teach marginalized students—those who do not fit in the formal contemporary educational designs. It offers a

structure in which teachers may adapt their teaching within the constructs of the educational system.

The present study will be informative for all educators interested in developing their professionalism and critically review the four ethical standards of teaching, which are: care, respect, trust, and integrity (OCT, 2012). My methods embrace the pedagogical applications of caring theory and maternal pedagogy. The Ontario College of Teachers' (OCT, 2012) *Foundations of Professional Practice* states that the purposes of the ethical standards for the teaching profession are:

- to inspire members to reflect and uphold the honour and dignity of the teaching profession
- to identify the ethical responsibilities and commitments in the teaching profession
- to guide ethical decisions and actions in the teaching profession
- to promote public trust and confidence in the teaching profession. (p. 8)

The four pillars of ethical standards for the teaching profession are: care, respect, trust, and integrity. Although these pillars are mentioned in the OCT's ethical standards policy, the way they are implemented largely tends to be solely for the dominant group in society. The dominant group in society is that which does not follow deviancy, law breaking, or destruction of social order. Some policies do not take into account the diverse lives of students, their families, or their cultural practices. Marginalized students may need the implementation of these four pillars in a different way than that of the dominant group:

Teaching in the community ... requires a level of sensitivity and understanding about the lives of children who are in attendance at the school. More than that, it

requires a conscious awareness and capacity for caring about the social worlds that the children inhabit and move through as they perform their tasks at school. (Mogadime, 2012, p. 203)

Learning to use care, respect, trust, and integrity through the lens of caring theory, and especially maternal pedagogy brings these four pillars to a different level of interaction in an educational setting. The results will offer strategies to work in a classroom environment and include marginalized students.

With regards to curriculum development, this project may inspire more engaging lessons which may involve learning dynamically and integrating knowledge from other disciplines. Teachers may work together in sharing units and multi-leveled learning environments. Ultimately, the results will be of benefit to the students who will be able to acknowledge the interdependence of subject course matter. Students who might regularly resist or reject formal education may be more open and engaged through the teacher's methods of applying caring theory and maternal theory. As learners, students have an opportunity to foster a new interest in continuing education.

Some students in this low socio-economic community have low literacy and would not be destined for university or college. It is a truth that not all students are streamlined for academia, but they still have chances for legitimate work and training. The students from the reserve had a feeling of being different from those who go to university or college, just as the students who live in Port Draw. I had considered this as part of the structure of social capital, and not being from the dominant group of society. It may also be a way to exclude themselves as a group, purposefully rejecting any education to identify with their own class. bell hooks discusses university walls as a symbol of

inclusion or conversely, exclusion and separation to different members of our society; she stated that our “government mandates attendance in school supporting a democratic education, but that social class elitism ensures that biases are taught” (p. 43). It is implied that if one does not go to university or college, a student is not a sophisticated learner (bell hooks, 2003). When working with these students, I often struggle with this issue. Because they are aware of their “place” in the community, the students do not believe that they will ever be sophisticated learners. The passion for literacy and learning that I try to instill in them is that they may learn on their own, read, and develop themselves and their interests. Pragmatically, students who are not streamlined for college still need literacy skills to attend vocational school. They will need literacy skills throughout life for day-to-day living, and for most jobs.

Part of the rationale of this study is to look at how the students look critically at their reality. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970) suggests that the observed complacency is actually a symptom of oppression:

Education as the act of freedom – as opposed to education as the practice of domination – denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from men. (69)

My goal as an educator is to open doors and windows to life and show students who are resistant to education that life is vast and varied with many opportunities.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

Students who are selected will have an interest in participating. So, the study may be skewed since in school, students are not enrolled in class on the basis of whether they have an interest; the courses are often not optional. The sample group from which I will

collect my data will be committed and be willing to share information. That being said, my sample group will consist of six students. This is extremely small considering so much is riding on the results of the data from four marginalized students to represent the larger population of marginalized students. Some other limitations are that there will not be a study on ethnicity or culture based on marginalization. I am also choosing students of low socio-economic status and although the rates of marginalized students are based factually from students of this class in society, there are students from other socio-economic statuses that are marginalized and their stories of exclusion may vary from those of the target group I have selected.

Identification of Bias

It was important for me to recognize that I created some of the limitations of the study by having my own biases with regards to teaching students of low socio-economic status. While teaching students, I often created circumstances to empower students. This sort of bias was an assumption that the student wants power and conversely was powerless. Also, “giving” power this does not actually empower the students, but actually empowers myself and my own identity within the constructs of the project.

Another important aspect that the researcher must always keep in mind was that this was a research project geared to students who had resisted formal education, had little or no literacy skills, and may have had limited skills with regards to organizing information or expressing thoughts and opinions. The researcher should have had expectations that were realistic to the skill level of the student participants.

I also had a bias about the status of students within a given social class and especially those coming from poor communities. I assumed that there were problems

with family dynamics, health, nutrition, study skills and grades, and overall low self-image within the community. I assumed that the community does not support families of low socio-economic status and that it is assumed that most are lazy, unproductive, and unambitious. Through my bias, I wanted to show students another way of living, to create a life of abundance and prosperity. I wanted to show that they have a power of choice in bettering their lives and reach their goals and aspirations. To be without bias, I would have had to identify that students actually had difficulties based on their socio-economic status and that their community did not support them in achieving their goals and aspirations.

Lastly, one of greatest influencing biases for me would have been the fact that I have had a lot of success working with youth at risk or students from low socio-economic status. Many students with drug or alcohol issues cleaned up their act under my influence. I have shown students that they do have power and could achieve everything that anyone of higher socio-economic status or with more cultural capital was able to do. Students with a record of low attendance and apathy for their educational successes had altered their views and improved their academic standings. Some students had low self-esteem and learned to believe in themselves again. Time and again, my teaching methods often created success with students who did not necessarily succeed in an academic setting. Because of my successes, I assumed that my methods would work and that projects I choose to invest time and energy in would succeed because I had succeeded with past projects.

Success does not have to be limited to a classroom environment. Success could happen at any time and any place, just as learning could happen any time and in any

place. Focusing strictly on success based within a school setting and during school hours was where most of these students experience challenges. After taking chances and gaining confidence in a less threatening environment, students would be more apt to try the same strategies in school during regularly scheduled classes. My personal feelings of success as a teacher were being able to “get through” to a student and help him or her reach or see the possibilities of their own potential. I have had great joy to witness students who perceived themselves as powerless take charge of their lives and learn to make good choices and understand that consequences could be both good and bad.

Outline of Remainder of the Document

Chapter 2 is the review of the related literature that has supported or influenced my research. I will be discussing theories based on economic status such as the culture of poverty, control theory, and the school-to-prison pipeline, which together offer the reader suggestions on how our society sets up oppressive situations for youth-at-risk and theories as to why it may be beneficial for our society to allot a certain segment to be streamlined to be excluded from dominant group in communities. Cumming, Strnadová, and Dowse (2014) state that there are a

range of factors that put youth at risk for delinquency (Catalano, Loeber, & McKinney, 1999; Hawkins et al., 2000; Loeber & Farrington, 2000). These include individual, family, school, community, and peers, with the number, types, duration, timing, and severity of risks identified as affecting the likelihood of antisocial behavior (Christle et al., 2005). Quinn, Rutherford, Leone, Osher, and Poirer (2005) further identified a range of demographic variables that appear to contribute to delinquency including: (a) ethnic and minority status, (b) poverty,

(c) aggressive behaviour, (d) family problems, (e) inconsistent discipline/parenting, (f) physical abuse, (g) substance abuse, (h) living in a high crime area, and (g) a family culture of delinquency. (p. 79)

As well, in chapter 2, I will discuss some theories on alternative education practices such as schoolhome, place-based learning, and nature theory. These theories offer new angles and opportunities for learning environments for students who resist or are unable to function in formal and regulatory learning environments. They also create curriculum that must be adapted to reflect these different and alternative learning environments. Funds of knowledge will be discussed throughout chapter 2 in regards to how they influence each of these theories. For the most part, I want to connect all these theories through the lens of the student who may have different roots and connections to culture and society. The way a student responds in a learning environment is explicitly linked to his/her past experiences and informal learning. Lastly, I will discuss the importance of maternal pedagogy and caring theory when working with marginalized students. Maternal pedagogy and caring theory together are the vehicle in which change can happen. Understanding the dynamics of how and why students may wind up as delinquents through the lens of caring allows educators to empathetically create learning environments based on alternative learning methods and spaces. By implementing some of the theories and strategies of maternal pedagogy and caring theory, educators can connect to students in a way that may break through resistance to learning and help create the meaningful connections to the mainstream society. This theory may have an effect in breaking the streamline of student exclusion to education, and apathy to formal learning.

Through these discussions, I will create a theoretical framework to support the strategies I develop in teaching marginalized youths.

Chapter 3 will discuss my research methodology and design strategies. I will be focusing on a qualitative research design, collecting my data through interviews, journals, sketchbooks, and field notes. I will be discussing the use and implementation of auto/biography, ethnography, and phenomenology. My three main research questions will be included in chapter 3 along with an account of a past experimental program that I developed that led me into this research project. Finally, I will discuss the community and validity of creating such a project in this area as well as the Literacy Labyrinth and the outline of all aspects of this project including the criteria of selecting participants, and the project itself.

Chapter 4 describes the process of my data collection. I will discuss the three case studies and examples of the data I collected from them. Through this chapter, and the data I collected I will make connections to the theories that have influenced my research. I will provide narratives to describe each of the three case studies and the way in which they interacted with my teaching strategies and the research theories that I structured the lessons for each session.

Chapter 5 is a discussion of the results of my research. I will elaborate on the findings of my research through investigating particular lessons and important teachable moments during the research sessions with the 3 student participants. Discussions will be based on data collected such as paintings, drawings, journal entries, word webs, recorded discussions, and formal writing exercises. I will reflect and discuss implications of the findings as well as making critical connections to the theories and research questions.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Chapter 2 represents a motivating factor for coming back to university to obtain my Master of Education degree. I wanted to discover theoretical referencing to explain how my teaching practices were successful. I also wanted to know how to replicate these successes and find theoretical sources to improve on my teaching practices. Through study and influence from my professors and other colleagues, many theories arose. Some of the theories that will be touched upon are the culture of poverty, Paul Willis's anti-school subculture, caring theory, maternal pedagogy, and funds of knowledge. Narrative theory and autobiographies will unpack all these theories as a way to create living examples of the implications of cultural capital and hegemony on the successes and obstacles of students.

Culture of Poverty

Upon starting the Master of Education program, I focused mainly on poverty and its direct impact on low socio-economic groups and the theories related to it. Oscar Lewis (1998) developed the theory of the culture of poverty. Through this lens people who are identified as belonging to this status have strong feelings of marginality, helplessness, and dependency. They also feel as though they do not belong to the dominant group in society, and will be convinced that the existing institutions do not serve their interests and needs. (Lewis, 1998). Freire claims that "schools, curriculum and educational methods are intimately related to the social, political, and economic conditions and their contexts – the communities of which they are a part" (as cited in Gutek, 2005, p. 432). Essentially, if there are imbalances in the way students are treated within the school system due to hegemonic structures within the school system, or the lack of cultural capital, the

outcomes of some students' educational successes will be different than others. Some of the results for adolescent factors of this imbalance are: dropping out, peer pressure, rebellion, violence, deviancy, and that teachers are often absent from policy debates to speak on behalf of these students and assist in making school policy to support these students. One of my biggest challenges was to encourage my students to attend for the whole semester. On the reserve, the semester was set in blocks so that they would attend only one subject and complete it within 6 weeks. The chances of a student attending for the full 6 weeks were greater than if it were in a regular 4.5-month long semester. Most students when faced with an academic challenge or a personal problem would opt out of going to school rather than learn strategies to overcome it. On the whole they were already defeated and had an extreme sense of hopelessness as far as their abilities to succeed in an academic setting. The students in Draw Port whom I taught were very similar in their attitudes and were very aware of the imbalance of power. For the most part, the graffiti was a way for these students to be heard. Unfortunately, most of the community responded in an extremely negative way.

Narrative Theory: Autobiography

As a teacher, I spent much of my time writing and documenting the day-to-day occurrences, especially when I was teaching on the reserve. So many incidents occurred that I was continually trying to document just so I had a record of conversations and interactions in case I was ever questioned about an incident. After a while I found that my writing became more reflexive and that I was thinking through the incidents so that I could problem solve and gain insights in order to help my students, and later myself as a teacher to achieve success. Although not formalized, much of the writing was as a diary

study. “With the potential of accessing individual lives as they are lived, registering the flow of events just as they occur, and in the author’s own voice, the diary has a characteristic flexibility which makes it the ‘document of life par excellence’” (Bagnoli, 2004, para. 3.2). Documenting events just as they occurred along with my reactions and students reactions to events allowed me to go back and critically read through the lenses of the theories I have studied. Much of my own writing will be based on auto-ethnographic writing. Auto-ethnography is “a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts ... and highlights the self-critical element entailed in writing about oneself” (du Preez, 2008, p. 510). For the most part, I found that theory such as that about First Nations people and their history was much different reading about it. There was sterility to it. When I lived with a First Nations community and taught their children, I learned more about how deeply the experiences subtly and blatantly affect their lives. Writing as I lived and experienced teaching in that community allowed me to gain insights beyond that of the theoretical space available in so-called book learning. I will also adopt an auto-ethnographic stance when working with my students and documenting interactions with the Helping Hands non-profit organization.

When working with my select group of students during my research, I chose to have them all write formally their opinions or responses to different themes. Their writing was more relational in which their beliefs, ideas, and formations of their own identity is based on Herman’s “dialogical self,” which is defined as “multiple voices speaking within the same subject, and engaging in a process of inner dialogue between different and contrasting worldviews” (Bagnoli, 2004, para. 2.2). Throughout the designing of the project, the students and I had an opportunity to wrestle with alternative viewpoints

amongst themselves, societal issues, leadership, and political issues working with multiple levels of administration through Helping Hands.

One aspect of the narrative was reading and acknowledging bias. I am very interested in learning more about my own bias as well as the inherent bias of my students. Although bias is often considered a negative aspect of research, it could also be mind-opening as well since it is through our bias that we view and judge our reality as good or bad. Bias helps us to make assumptions on predicting future events and making our choices. “Instead of making futile attempts to avoid something that cannot be avoided, we should think more carefully about how to utilise our subjectivity as part to the research process” (Haynes, 2006, p. 404). I am hoping that I may become more aware of my bias and thus create deeper insight into knowing myself and understanding how to become a better teacher through practicing reflexivity.

Willis: Anti-School Subculture

Peer pressure and cultural rules within the low socio-economic status play a huge role in student successes in an academic setting. This was observed by Paul Willis (1979) who mentions in *Learning to Labor* that the boys see external restrictions on their freedom but fail to recognize their own internal ‘codes of behaviour’ which are also rules: “though informal, such groups nevertheless have rules of a kind which can be described – though they are characteristically framed in contrast to what ‘rules are normally taken to mean’” (p. 24). Many students I worked with in both the reserve and in Draw Port rejected the harsh rules from administrators, and hated the system and community codes of conduct.

Such students did not realize that much of their deviant behaviours such as vandalism, skipping classes, and resistance to participating or doing homework were rules constructed by themselves and influenced by peers. These students followed the rules of resistance, which gave them power. Willis (1979) also noted that boys reject mental labour and pursue manual labour because they perceive manual labour as an expression of masculine power and superiority and a source of autonomy not repression (p. 109). For the most part, most students in the Draw Port neighbourhood had been raised by families who had worked primarily at local factories. Almost all industry in the city had been sent overseas and many families lived on welfare or had non-legitimate ways of earning a living. Many students identified their gender and future based on the lifestyle and values taught by their families and members of their socio-economic status. Gender statuses of males were initiated through peer pressure. This refers more to funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) and will be discussed later in this chapter. By doing the vandalized graffiti, these youth were respected and honoured by their peers. After beginning the graffiti art project, students received not only respect and honour from their peers, but also from the community at large and the faculty and administrators from the schools. This clearly made an impact on their views of education, school, and their place in the community. It is important to help form good values and goals for every cultural group and resist hegemonic, cultural capital so that all members of society can have a chance at success, just as Willis (2000) believes that ideas are produced within cultural relationships rather than just filtering down from the dominant group.

There are short-term benefits from excluding a behavioural student from interrupting a classroom. In the long-term though the multitudes of students excluded from the classroom become a burden in our society. As soon as a student is being sent from the classroom, the educational process of learning has come to a halt. By not being present in the classroom, the student gets behind in the studies and as a result there is imminent failure. By being excluded, students have missed opportunities for academic success and learning appropriate social behaviours. Also, by being excluded, students have more opportunity to be associated with other delinquent peers and have the extra time for participating in neighbourhood violence or vandalism. The results of exclusion and spending time in such a fashion mean less opportunity to find meaningful employment or being included in legitimate youth recreation programs.

Hegemonic Dominance Through Language (Literacy)

It is very difficult for some students to break out of their identities related to funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et. al., 2005). Many students consider resistance to education as a way to rebel against the dominant group and their values and ultimately resist conformity. Even gifted students will resort to illiteracy of oppression or illiteracy of resistance. Illiteracy of oppression

is a direct consequence of the process of integration/assimilation at work in the public school and in the entire society; it results in the slow destruction of identity and the means of resistance in the minority community; thus, it is brought about by the oppressive action of the majority society. (Cummins, 1997, p. 416)

The lesser dominant group identifies a formal education as “becoming” the dominant group. The minority group rejects formal education in the hopes of maintaining and preserve their own heritage.

A person from a lesser dominant group can have a formal education and still be a strong and involved member of his or her community. Illiteracy of resistance is instituted by the minority group itself who, wishing to safeguard its language and culture, and fearing assimilation, turns in on itself and rejects the form of education imposed by the majority group. At the extreme, the minority group would prefer to remain illiterate rather than risk losing its language. (Cummins, 1997, p. 416)

When taking into account the educational history of the First Nations students I had taught, these two forms of resistance to education are very important to consider. I also find that is it equally relevant to any group of youths who have been marginalized in the education system.

Hegemonic Hurdles in Education

One of the hegemonic hurdles in education is to authenticate alternative methods of education. Often times if the practices do not follow the standard guidelines of teaching, it is not respected or is considered lesser in quality. Hegemonic curriculum defines what real or teaching-worthy knowledge. “The competitive academic curriculum sits alongside other kinds of curriculum in the schools—such as practical knowledge in music or in manual arts—but remains hegemonic in the sense that it defines ‘real’ knowledge” (Connell, 1994, 138). Alternative teaching methods often requires integration of the arts or other interdisciplinary methods of teaching and learning.

Some of the barriers are initiated from long-standing members of the educational field who have maintained the status quo on acceptable teaching and evaluation standards. The work that alternative educators do is usually new and contemporary. Often it may be exploratory in nature and thus there is an element of unpredictability with the outcomes of learning and teaching. These alternative methods sometimes are not given merit because the teachers who are administering the alternative education are often holding less cultural capital and are not well-established within the community.

Students were also aware of their lack of cultural capital. Students identified with their status and have expectations for themselves based on their groups' placement from the dominant group. Often students will have given up before trying. Many students with low cultural capital have psychological states such as: marginality, helplessness, dependency, not belonging, convinced that the existing institutions do not serve their interests and needs, feeling of powerlessness and inferiority, feeling of inferiority, and personal unworthiness (Lewis, 1998, p. 7). Inclusionary strategies, including parents in the child's academic development, and being aware of the students' reality outside of class helps to support students helps to close the gaps which will allow opportunity for students lacking cultural capital.

Funds of Knowledge

Thinking about the notion of funds of knowledge, one issue I discovered when working with marginalized students is that they have an integral understanding of informal learning and time spent learning and understanding the world outside of a classroom or formal institutional space. Whenever interacting with students, I

acknowledge the learning that has taken place in their informal settings. Funds of knowledge are

the skills and knowledge that have been historically and culturally developed to enable an individual or household to function within a given culture, and argue that integrating funds of knowledge into classroom activities creates a richer and more highly scaffolded learning experience for students. (Moll et al., 1992, 133)

One thing I found interesting as I compared between the students on the Indian reserve and the marginalized students in Draw Port was that they used their environment as an excuse to not have to learn. The students on the reserve would say either “Why do I have to learn this? We live on the Rez!” or conversely would say, “Why do I have to learn this? Everything I need to learn, I learnt in the bush (or on the Rez)!” Students in Draw Port would similarly say, “Why do I have to learn this? You realize this is Draw Port?” or conversely would say, “Why do I have to learn this? Everything I need to know I learned on the streets!” This is when I really believed that poverty has a huge impact on students’ attitude towards formalized and structured education. The lessons learned outside the classroom impacts the student and have value worth exploring and integrating in the classroom. “Educators must dedicate their time to getting to know their students as individuals by exploring their personal interests. Educators can then create an inclusive blueprint for understanding how students’ interests can be incorporated into classroom discussion and academic material” (Natt, 2014, p. 59). On the reserve, long before I knew about funds of knowledge, I understood that incorporating the students’ history, culture, and knowledge into lessons created an engaging and interesting class. For example, while I taught on the reserve, the spiritual guiding force for many Ojibwe community members

was the Seven Grandfathers. These were the concepts of wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth. I posted the Seven Grandfathers on the board or on the wall so that I could refer to them throughout the lessons. It was an important part of their informal knowledge and it helped the students connect and relate to many lessons. I was also able to learn more about their culture by welcoming their culture into my classroom and allowing it to influence the way I planned and taught my lessons.

School-to-Prison Pipeline

One of the most shocking theories I came across was the school-to-prison pipeline which is mentioned by a few theorists, and mainly Ayers (1997, 2013), a political activist and scholar in education. His concern is how the education system and society as a whole is dealing with the delinquent youth of our society. Ayers (2013) suggests that the government should use the justice system as a meaningful way to build economy. The ways in which jails are filled has much to do with how we streamline and condition a certain segment of our population for incarceration and exclusion from the dominant society. The process involves stigmatizing, segregating, silencing, suppressing, and sentencing the student (Save the Kids Group, n.d.). Exclusionary educational procedures are used often when teachers are unable to manage the classroom efficiently and will send out the most badly behaved student. When I worked in the First Nations high school, most students were counting on me to send them out of the classroom. Instead of going to the office, they would leave the school and spend the day doing whatever pleased them. I would never send a student to the office. I dealt with it in the classroom and eventually they figured out that they were in class no matter what their behaviour. When students are sent from the classroom, they are excluded from the lessons of the day

and fall behind. As they fall behind their behaviour becomes worse and they are sent away more frequently by the classroom teacher. Eventually, the student's behaviour becomes so bad that there is disciplinary action of suspension and even expulsion. After missing so much school, the result is "academic failure, exclusionary discipline practices, and [finally] dropping out of school" (Christle et al., 2005, p.71). What do students do when they are excluded from the school system? This is the catalyst when they begin to say phrases such as "all I ever needed to know I learned on the streets." This is because they were not given any other option.

Another reason that students are excluded from educational settings as a disciplinary practice is to teach social control to the student body. Schools are mini societies and thus the faculty and administrators teach our youths how to conduct themselves, moral rights and wrongs, and societal consequences for stepping out of what is deemed acceptable. More or less, students are taught conformity. Students who do not conform to the rules or the way in which lessons are taught or curriculum expectations are then deemed as "others." Exclusion begins with IEPs, or exclusionary disciplinary actions. Students and faculty alike are conditioned to accept that exclusion as the result of behaviour that was deemed deviant. Travis Hirschi (1969) claimed that the essence of social control lies in people's anticipation of the consequences of their behaviour. As cited in Sociology (Macionis & Gerber, 2005) he developed Hirschi's Social Control Theory which the elements are: "attachment, opportunity, involvement, and belief. Attachment helps to encourage conformity; weak relationships in the family, peer group, and school leave people freer to engage in deviance" (Macionis & Gerber, 2005, p. 214) As a result of using exclusion as a way to discipline, the student does not have the

opportunity to experience inclusion and be influenced by positive individuals. In fact, the student is exposed to more behavioural and atypical members of society.

Inappropriate staff responses to student behaviours and the unwillingness of staff to recognize their roles in the etiology of problematic student behaviour characterized high-risk schools. ... Observers commented on the ineffective strategies used by staff to promote student compliance in the low-achieving, high suspending, and high dropout schools. (Christle et al., 2005, p.83)

The school administration is, in fact, encouraging deviancy by exclusion of marginalized students and because they are not attached to a positive group such as school, family, or peers, the disciplined student will find attachment from deviant sources. Opportunity occurs when the “higher one’s commitment to legitimate opportunity, the greater the advantages of conformity. A university-bound young person, with good career prospects, has a high stake in conformity. In contrast someone with little confidence in future success may drift towards deviance” (Macionis & Gerber, 2005, p. 215). The students who do not receive opportunities in a legitimate way will still look for opportunities.

Often, deviant opportunities are glamourized in music and movies which creates even more appeal to the excluded students because they yearn for status and recognition just like anyone else. Involvement for students is crucial. “Children require Connectedness ... Continuity ... Dignity ... [and] Opportunity” (McCluskey et al., 2005, p. 332). Deviancy is often avoided when students are “involved in legitimate activities such as holding down a job, going to school and completing homework, or pursuing hobbies” (Macionis & Gerber, 2005, p. 214). When students are excluded from being

involved in employment, clubs, and even homework, they will look for involvement and learning in deviant activities. Lastly, Hirchi states that: “strong beliefs in conventional morality and respect for authority figures restrain tendencies towards deviance. In contrast, people with a weak conscience (and those who spend a great deal of time without authority figure’s supervision) are more vulnerable to temptation” (as cited in Macionis & Gerber, 2005,215). Educators must support their students. When students make bad decisions, educators should be obligated to guide and counsel them, rather than ostracize them from the school or community. As human beings we are designed to live in organized groups. If the dominant group in society excludes an individual, that person will navigate to the marginalized community and adopt their morals, values, and gain their support.

Janks (2010) states that one of the most powerful ways to exclude a marginalized student is by “deny[ing] them access to the extensive resources available in that language; resources which have developed as a consequence of the language’s dominance. (p. 140). Students who want to be heard will strive to be in the dominant group. When students are excluded through disciplinary practices, their voices and thus opinions are not valued. This sends a message that they do not have as much value as the rest of the group who conforms to the school structure. The marginalized group will then turn to deviancy to be heard. Thus social control theory in effect controls the student by silencing those who do not follow the hegemonic order of society. Foucault also follows this concept:

None shall enter the order of discourse if he [sic] does not satisfy certain requirements or if he is not, from the outset, qualified to do so. To be more

precise: not all the regions of discourse are equally open and penetrable; some of them are largely forbidden (they are differentiated and differentiating), while others seem to be almost open to all winds and put at the disposal of every speaking subject, without prior restriction. (As cited in Janks, 2010, p. 132)

Students who dare to behave in a manner outside the status quo will be disciplined, excluded, and become voiceless. Social control thus is taught to students by experiencing or witnessing the exclusionary practices of those in power to the student body as a whole. Silencing the marginalized is part and parcel to the exclusionary disciplinary practices of those in authority.

Literacy and Community

The Literacy Labyrinth was an idea for a literacy/arts project that I have spent several years considering and hoping to design and create with a group of students. Youths' lack of engagement and physical or spiritual connection with their community was due to a lack of involvement. All students are required to do "volunteer hours" in order to graduate, but I wonder how many actually know why it is important to give the time and effort to benefit the people and the area in which one lives. The Literacy Labyrinth is a great alternative way to learn about literacy, but also is a way for students to become part of a positive influence in the development of their neighbourhood. Youths would learn all kinds of skills beyond literacy and classroom learning. The benefits would be interpersonal, interdependent, and altruistic.

When considering a project such as the Literacy Labyrinth, I find that it is important to live within the community and research from an ethnographic standpoint. It is extremely important to take into account the visual artifacts of the community and

notice how text is intermingled with public space; “walking through a community, looking at a community fully, a deeper engagement with space and place emerges” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 71). Graffiti Peace Project responded directly to the kinds of language being used in graffiti in Port Draw. The graffiti imposed violence and anger; everything about this graffiti communicated a rebellion against authority. The mood of the neighbourhood reflected the words and images that were displayed in Prince of Wales Park. Once the graffiti was altered and the words and images held peaceful messages, the neighbourhood changed. Different groups of people walked in the park than the groups that had frequented it before. The flower garden had more playful displays such as plants arranged to represent a turtle or the portrait of Kermit the Frog.

With regards to the Literacy Labyrinth, once completed, it will set a stage for the neighbourhood. It will allow for “artifacts, embedded in public and private spaces” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 21). It will create pride in the youth who had participated to build it, and it will also create a sense of ownership and history amongst the youth who are resistant to the dominant group of society. In doing so, it allows a door to open for these youth and allow them to see their community in a different light. There is far-reaching effects in altering identity and power of individuals who are members of this community when allowed to participate in community-based projects. The impact is greater with the development of skills such as literacy and integrating cultural connections through the arts.

As Willis (2000) noted, there is a “social relation between users and material items based on sensuous practices of engagement” (p. 26). By working through a project that benefits the community and learning outside of theoretical bookwork and classroom settings, some marginalized students will find more value in that which they learn. The

community of Draw Port has a history of blue-collar workers who did not invest time in a formal education to make a meaningful living. Rather, they found physical labour jobs that did not require high school graduation and did not value the pursuit of postsecondary education. The economics of this community have changed since the factories have all closed, but the core values of families in this community have not changed because the factory closures have been fairly recent. When working with students from the working class, there may be a “tendency to trust the body more than the word” (Willis, 2000, p. 95). As a result, marrying the hard work of constructing the labyrinth with the lessons in literacies makes the learning more meaningful and students, along with their families, can create value for the effort.

As a community in change since the factory closures, the use of literacy is markedly different in how it is intermingled between work, home, and school (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p.88). If there is resistance to literacy in the school based on old values from family due to the fact that literacy or formal education was not a necessary part of growing up, the community must step in to help with the transitions from one generation to another. The creation of a Literacy Labyrinth suggests a new path for growth and success for the youth in this community. Although this is a modified program based on learning and planning to create a labyrinth, this project hopefully will inspire educators to follow through with completion. As a completed project, it can be a place where more literacy programs could be developed in an alternative outdoor classroom environment. It creates an artifact that is linked from an art, work-based project with that of formal learning and development of literacy.

The Power of Love in Education: Maternal Pedagogy and Caring Theory

The student suicide that happened during my first day of professional teaching impacted me greatly—both personally and professionally. It made me consider deeply the important role and guiding influence a person such as a teacher may have on a student's life. I decided that I would rather teach my students from a standpoint of nurturing and caring than the clinical way that I was trained to do in teachers' college. I felt that teaching was much more than facilitating lessons and curriculum expectations. Without knowing it, I was creating a strategy based in maternal pedagogy while delivering the Ontario Ministry of Education's curriculum. I paid close attention to my students' needs and responded in kind as I encouraged them to learn (Rothman, 2007). The students needed compassion. The lessons played a secondary role to the relationship I had to build with my students. I needed to be aware of the students' emotional states, their community and cultural history, and how violence affects learning.

What I didn't realize is that I was following the three demands of maternal theory as applied to pedagogy: "the preservation of life, growth both educational and personal, and training and social acceptance" (Ruddick, 2007, 98). These three demands also support the OCT's purposes for ethical standards (OCT, 2012, p. 8). Specifically, by practicing the three demands of maternal pedagogy, I was also identifying "the ethical responsibilities and commitments in the teaching profession, ethical decisions and actions in the teaching profession" (OCT, 2012, p. 5). These ethical standards also helped to guide me as I implemented maternal pedagogy as an influence in my teaching strategies. Preservation of life includes caring for students' physical well-being. This includes nutritional and physical needs such as bandages, mittens, or other necessities. A teacher's

concern for students' educational and personal growth means that the teacher not only delivers the lessons but also is teaching students to make choices and develop as members of our society. For the teacher to be attentive to the training and social acceptance of students, the teacher may offer counselling or indirectly teach interpersonal or life-skills to the students. As a teacher, these are not necessarily mandatory, but from a maternal pedagogist's viewpoint it is a necessary part of nurturing and teaching the whole student.

What I learned on the reserve is that most marginalized students think their opinion doesn't matter because no one cares. Care theorists notice comments such as this:

We hear many students complain that "nobody cares." When we talk with teachers in the same schools, we may be convinced that these teachers do care and care deeply in the virtue sense. But something has gone badly wrong. People who are trying to care and people who want care have been unable to form caring relations. We cannot just say, "well, we cared." We have to admit a failure (a form of no-fault failure, perhaps) and analyze the situation that makes caring so difficult. (Noddings, 2013, p. 88)

Marginalized youth often do not believe they are heard or that they matter. Some of the issues have to do with the fact that although teachers care, there are rules and boundaries in place to keep a sense of school as an institution. For teachers to care, they may have to implement actions, and sometimes teachers absolutely have exhausted their efforts in just teaching and need support or resources to make the caring actions happen for the student (Klem & Connell, 2004).

For example, while on the reserve, I spent time after school counselling an English student who came regularly to class at 9:00 a.m. quite inebriated. Every day by the end of the class, he was sober and I spent time counselling him. Eventually, he chose to come to class sober. It was worth the effort since he applied himself once he realized he had a choice in his lifestyle and he learned the value of consequences. In another class, I had a 15-year-old female student who recently had a baby and did not have the support for child care. In order to be registered in class, she had to attend regularly and after five absences, she would be considered withdrawn from the course. She really wanted to continue her education, so I offered to let her come after class and I would give her an outline of the day's lessons and expect all the work to be handed in the next day. Every day that she showed up, I would count her in for the attendance as long as she completed all the required assignments and criteria for the course. A teacher's ability to work with students this way is care theory in action.

True caring occurs with action; thinking about it does not make it so. From my training with regards to the National Middle School Philosophy which was part of my specialization in my Bachelor of Education program and through practical experience during teacher training, I discovered that some points within the philosophy rang true with me. One of the action items in the philosophy is that there should be one adult advocate for every student. The National Middle School Association (NMSA, 2003) also advocates that teachers and schools create connections to community and develop the creation of community. That is why my classroom culture is so important to develop successes; I try to create a family or community within the time that all students attend the course. Creating inclusion in the classroom is an extension of all that happens in the

community. Encouraging students to be aware of differences and be accepting and open to those differences in the classroom often lead the same reaction outside of class. Having conversations about community and understanding unity as inclusion would also encourage acceptance of differences from students within the classroom as well. Using the idea of “unity as a means to irradiate the silent and damaging walls of exclusion” (Mogadime, Mentz, Armstrong, & Holtam, 2010, p. 816) within the constructs of the classroom meant the effects would often show up in a positive manner in the community. All students are taught to support one another to make successes so that we all move forward together.

True caring comes in knowing who the student is intrinsically; students should not be regarded as a temporal vessel in which to teach. Teachers and students alike benefit from knowing who that student is as a person. Everyone, including students, have their own funds of knowledge: “The concept of ‘funds of knowledge’ is based on a simple premise: people are competent and have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge” (Gonzalez et al., 2005, p. xi). When an educator takes into account students’ funds of knowledge, the whole student as a person is being acknowledged and the risk factors can be ascertained. The risk factors of deviancy are from “individual, family, community, peer, or weak academic skills” (Christle et al., 2005, p. 70).

By understanding who the students are in a classroom as people, teachers can then redress some of the imbalances of power in their place in society. To change student beliefs about their identity, status, or value in society based on their cultural, ethnic, and economic standing, educators must realize the impact they have in the classrooms to influence that change. To create change, sometimes teachers must take a role of

redressing and altering hegemonic educational policies and practices. “Schools can provide protective factors by offering a positive and safe learning environment, setting high yet achievable academic and social expectations, and facilitating academic and social success” (Christle et al., 2005, p. 70).

Another strategy that I used successfully from the stance of caring theory was to develop the schoolhome effect. That is, I made the classroom a less-sterile environment and included elements of a home environment. I had food and water in the classroom. When it was cold out, I would bring tea in a thermos for students to drink while they did their work. I had living plants and an aquarium which my high-school level students cared for, and this created a nurturing environment. Often with high school students, classrooms are set up much more sterile and students are trained that academia is separate from nature, home, and anything nurturing. More or less, the standard school is very institutional. Learning can happen anywhere and that there should be interconnectedness between home and school. “All human beings are dependent on some others at times throughout their lives. The challenge was to integrate these empirical and conceptual insights into our theorizations” (Robinson, 2011, p. 11). This was also how I developed a “family” classroom culture, because the sterility of the classroom was non-existent. Students learned community caring skills by supporting one another and thus learned lessons deeper than just what the core curriculum expected.

I was very interested in Jane Roland Martin’s (1992) descriptions of creating liminal spaces and dissolving the binary delineations between home and school. Many of my students did not do well in a structured classroom environment. I found that they could attend as long as the lesson or lecture occurred but after that, they began to feel

uncomfortable and could not stay for long periods of time in the classroom. I began to create lessons where much of the work would happen outside of the classroom and often at home. Students who had a history of not doing homework were beginning to have to interact with family and develop learning environments in their own home to complete their schoolwork. Because of the hegemonic structures of power and control, many students would resist sitting in class for any length of time although they had no problem sitting for hours in their home doing activities that interested them. By creating a classroom that was reminiscent of home, students began to want to stay longer and care for their learning space; they also conversely found that they were able to learn at home as well. Ironically, I discovered that I was doing this all intuitively. This intuition or deep connection that I have between myself and my students can be defined as relational knowledge:

We are talking about a teacher's knowing as dynamic and interactive with the knowing of students with whom the teacher is in-relation. What is radical about this view is that an individual's knowledge is no longer conceived of as bounded and separate from the knowing of the other person's (with whom they are in relation). (Webb & Blond, 1995, p. 624)

As a graduate student, I now have a deeper understanding of what I was doing by deconstructing; school became less defined and the “well-being for people is achieved and sustained through relations and activities of care and that, in the absence of these relations or where they are deficient or disrupted, well-being and security are threatened” (Robinson, 2011, p. 11). The schoolhome theory was an extension of relational

knowledge by softening and building the interconnectedness of learning and living spaces being both at school and at home.

Schoolhome Theory

Roland Martin (1992) describes in *The Schoolhome* another aspect of caring theory through the implementation of the “3 Cs”: Care, Concern, Connection (Martin, 1992, p. 122). The 3 Cs was a very important strategy I used intuitively, and very successfully, while teaching students in the high school division on the reserve in northern Ontario. It is now a part of my methods and strategies in teaching. In today’s society, “the home cannot be counted on to transmit the love; the three C’s of care, concern, and connection; and the knowledge, skills attitudes, and values that enable each individual born into this society to become a member of human culture” (Roland Martin, 1995, 357). For many of my students, their home environment was not a nurturing environment. The classroom culture was that of a supportive environment and I tried to develop a team or family spirit where we all helped each other. Students were very receptive to knowing that I cared for them; I was concerned for their well-being and made real connections with each student by knowing them as individuals.

An important aspect of knowing care and concern is to look inwardly and outwardly. The connections made outwardly helps students discover how their actions have an impact globally through making connections. I would often find issues to discuss that happened in distant places and help them make connections on how global environmental issues can impact a student even though it happened halfway around the world. I would also assign research projects so that students would make connections about how they can impact others globally. One example would be that I often would

have students look at environmental issues in the micro and macro forms and understand the connections between their community and the world and how each is interdependent.

Caring theory emphasizes self-knowledge as a means to end violence. Ironically, most at-risk students who resist formal education base their knowledge on all that they have learned outside of the education system and claim to know themselves well. Students are bombarded with all kinds of media and electronics that encourage and glamorize violence. On the news, there are incidents of shocking violence such as the “knock-out game” or students acting out some violent movie and subsequently killing a peer. Often times, at-risk youth do not consider the consequences of their choices, actions, or opinions. “For students immersed in a violent society, the search for meaning is especially important. Just to engage in such a search is a sign of caring for one’s self” (Noddings, 2002, 33). Schools play an important role in teaching students to think critically about choices and actions that they consider acceptable. This relates back to the maternal pedagogy’s demand to train our students to be socially acceptable, and responsible. By integrating care theory with carefully planned lessons based on the Ministry of Education’s curriculum expectations, students will have an opportunity to question their own values and practice making difficult decisions and understanding the consequences, both good and bad, before the event arises.

The pursuit of self-knowledge—knowledge of the self as an individual, as a male or female, as a member of a race and community, as part of a particular age group—blends easily into a study of relations with others. Part of learning to care for one’s self is a concomitant learning to care for others. (Noddings, 2002, 35)

Students may also learn to question how they are influenced by the media or peer pressure and make choices based on their own values based on having the opportunity to gain self-knowledge.

Students who normally resist formal education will often embrace alternative educational practices or environments. Nell Noddings (2013) supports this view point:

The structure of schooling, especially at the secondary level, makes it impossible for teachers to give individual students the attention caring requires. Furthermore, in attempts to overcome their perceived academic failure, schools have become more and more coercive with respect to what is studied, and where and when it is studied. (p. 180)

I discovered that the less controlled and intimidating a space was, the more involved youth at risk became. Youth at risk who say they learned everything they need to know on the streets sometimes feel a comfort being out of a restrictive space. I found that teaching outdoors and especially in a natural environment such as a park was extremely beneficial for student learning successes.

I am a strong advocate for creating a “family” type of classroom environment. To make this authentic, it would be best to have all faculties in the school adopt and support this strategy. For students to really understand a family or caring community bond, sometimes teachers must model the behaviour and caring interactions that are desired. A sense of community and collaborative efforts amongst teachers working within the construct of caring theory would have some or all of the following attributes:

1. Shared norms and values
2. Collective focus on student learning

3. Collaboration
4. De-privatized practice
5. Reflective dialogue. (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996, 760)

If additionally working through the schoolhome approach, teachers would treat each other as if they were family. Even in a professional setting, there would be tasks where teachers would model care and support one another to model this behaviour.

Nature and Alternative Nurturing Spaces for Learning

Alternative natural learning spaces are something that is strongly advocated by Richard Louv (2006). I am strongly influenced by the research, documentations, and arguments he has put forth about the difference in quality of learning, brain development, and overall development of a student if he/she is exposed to natural or outdoor spaces. For the students who had experienced successes in learning on the streets or away from the formalized and sometimes restrictive environment of the classroom, taking the lessons to where the student is comfortable is a great way to have to student become involved and striving for success. When I created the Graffiti Art Peace Project, I taught students who were from the community they were vandalizing. They were taught in an area where students had actually vandalized and knew the space in a way that most would not. By bringing these students into the areas they are familiar with in the community and then teaching visual arts and literacy skills, I was in fact practicing place-based learning, which is the experience of students “learning directly within the local community of a student” (Louv, 2006, p. 207).

Richard Louv has documented many qualitative narrative and ethnographic biographical data about how children respond to natural environments. He has discussed

how the brain is wired differently if a youth is exposed to too much electronics opposed to having a balance with interaction with nature. There was some discussion about the responses students who are at risk or have learning disabilities have when in nature opposed to being in an indoor controlled learning environment. Louv (2006) discusses the benefits of outdoor learning and the importance of how nature affects staff and students alike:

Children are more likely to invent their own games in green play spaces rather than on flat playgrounds or playing fields. Green play spaces also suit a wider array of students and promote social inclusion, regardless of gender, race, class, or intellectual ability. Cognitive and behavioral benefits accrue well beyond school boundaries. In inner-city housing projects in Chicago, investigators found that the presence of trees outside apartment buildings was predictors of certain behaviors: less procrastination, better coping skills, greater self-discipline among girls, better social relationships, and less violence. Educators benefit, too. Canadian researchers found that teachers expressed renewed enthusiasm for teaching in schools that engage their students in natural settings. (p. 2006)

Chapter Summary

I found there was interdependency between many of these theories. If I practice maternal pedagogy, caring theory, and the schoolhome approach, and by also bringing in nature to the classroom, I am enriching the first three theories and also support Richard Louv's theories about nature and learning environments. If we cannot take the student to nature, then we should bring nature to the student. In the tutoring agency that I am managing and teaching in, I have transformed the learning centre from a sterile environment to a nurturing environment. There are many plants and trees, and the central point of interest for students is a fish tank with goldfish. I make "baby" plants from the trees and plants that are growing profusely and send them home with the students. Most of these students are uncomfortable with or resist any form of homework or study; however, the students overall enjoy the learning centre. So, I have encouraged students to recreate that positive environment and use the baby plants and trees as a way to create that nurturing connection between home and the learning centre. Most often, students find that it works and they love taking care of a plant that originated from the learning centre.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

To conduct the research study featured in this Major Research Paper, I adopted qualitative research methods that focused on observational data, interviews, journals/sketchbooks, and detailed field notes. In this chapter, I will describe my methodology and how I plan to conduct the research. The Literacy Labyrinth research project was based on a qualitative study investigating the merit of teaching literacy in exploratory arts based curriculum set in alternative learning environments. Researchers and students alike explored, recorded, and responded to the lessons and activities. Participants expressed their viewpoints on education through journals, conversations, interviews, and behaviour. The implications of the research could be creating curriculum that will encourage youth at risk to engage in literacy and education as a whole. Educators may be offered alternative ways to educate and work with marginalized students with new educational strategies, programs, and interactive methods to engage active participation and learning.

The research is structured and I have adopted action research as my approach to data collection. It is action research because, as a visual arts educator and as the arts guide my pedagogy, I heed the following: “The recognition that what is called minority problems are indeed the problems of the majority; research as more than diagnosis, comprehending the cycle of planning, acting and evaluation; the triangle of action, research and education” (Streck, 2013, p. 460). The qualitative methodology adopted to conduct this research project will be through the processes of interviews, auto/biographical journals and sketchbooks, ethnographic and narrative field notes, phenomenology, and action research.

Action Research

At the outset of planning the Literacy Labyrinth research project, I planned to accomplish it in the method of action research. A requirement of action research is to have an underlying question to research. In the Literacy Labyrinth research project, I will apply certain teaching practices in order to research my question: Do arts-based approaches to learning motivate youth? Action research is:

Any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment, to gather information about the ways that their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn. This information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment (and on educational practices in general), and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved. (Mills, 2000, p. 5)

This happened through the use of researching through observations, field notes, and collecting data from student participants' journals and sketchbooks. It would specifically identify these students and the course of development and change throughout the 8 weeks that I taught in an alternative method.

Action research is also future-oriented to some action or cycle of actions. It was my hope that from the research that occurs through the Literacy Labyrinth, some successes would be documented and the teaching practices and interdisciplinary curriculum would be replicated to encourage successes for other marginalized students elsewhere. It was also a "systematic, intentional inquiry that investigates professional practice to understand and improve work" (Ballard, 2015, p. 46). By creating the Literacy

Labyrinth curriculum and developing an interdisciplinary method of teaching literacy along with other curriculum, students may benefit greatly by being engaged and achieving successes in multiple ways, including academically. The benefit for professional educators is that it will offer new strategies and methods in planning and delivering lessons; it may even improve the quality of the way the lessons are taught and ultimately create successes for the teacher by allowing more students to benefit from learning effectively. The teachers may also learn the importance of interdependence of faculty with regards to team teaching and the value of interdisciplinary curriculum building. Action research is also a great tool for evidence-based practice. The evidence used in my research is based on qualitative observations of interviews, field notes, sketches, conversations, and recorded visual and auditory events.

According to Mills (2007), there are five components/beliefs of practical action research:

1. Teacher researchers have decision making authority which they use to determine what they will research and how they will conduct their study.
2. Teacher researchers are committed to constant professional development, and they work towards school improvement.
3. Teacher researchers want to reflect their practices to improve the quality of their instruction and the growth of their students.
4. Teacher researchers still develop a thorough action plan that identifies how they will reflect on their own practice.
5. Teacher researchers will select an issue to examine, determine how they will collect the data, analyze and interpret their data, and use their findings to identify reforms

that are needed to improve their practice. (As cited in Honsinger, 2010, p. 55)

Dialectic Action Research Spiral

The dialectic action research spiral (see Figure 2) is a visual representation of the action researcher's methods. It is a road map to refer to when researching as well. "It was designed to provide teacher researchers with 'provocative and constructive ways' of thinking about their work" (Mills, 2007, p. 20). This model is extremely fluid and as such, can be inspirational to the researcher on how to develop a deeper understanding of process and richer research methods.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted on a sample group of participants at the beginning and end of the project. Throughout the project, I have developed formal lesson plans with an objective to move towards building the labyrinth. As the labyrinth project was halted upon the beginning of construction, the data collected will be all artwork, journals, sketchbooks, and interviews based on the study and preparation to build the labyrinth. The interview questions will not be the same at the conclusion of the project. As a researcher, I will be looking for language, and responses that show ways in which the program had influenced or changed their opinions of identity, education, and community. The interview will also be a way for me to investigate the change of participants' uses of language, vocabulary, and interest in participating.

Narrative

Both I as researcher and the student participants would be writing in journals and sketchbooks to respond to lessons and to critically analyze beliefs in identity and personal interactions with each other or the public. The student participants and I would be

encouraged to connect to our respective past histories and experiences, funds of knowledge, family beliefs, or cultural responses. The linking of life stories would offer my insight as the researcher and also the student participants' world view and biases and provide alternative perspectives from which to challenge changes in development and deliverance of curriculum. Much of the participants' journaling was written with loosely defined criteria. This encouraged personalized narratives to unlock funds of knowledge and ethnographic perceptions of the Literacy Labyrinth project.

Phenomenology

The backbone of this research was based on reflexivity and phenomenology. Close attention to phenomenological occurrences while being aware of the bias and conditioned expectations and responses to events helped with documentation of all research conducted. There are five defining aspects to phenomenology (Creswell, 2012) and each point will be discussed as it was applied to the Literacy Labyrinth research project.

The first point is that "the researcher needs to understand the philosophical perspectives behind the approach, especially the concept of studying how people experience a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2012, p. 68). I will be taking into account the way in which experiences are processed through the lenses of funds of knowledge, socio-economic status, bias, individual history, cultural expectations of the peer groups and community, and personal past experiences. When regarding the phenomenon, I will be critically analyzing these elements that influence experience, and I will be looking for similarities and differences with both how researcher and student participants view the phenomenon.

Sample Dialectic Action Research Spiral

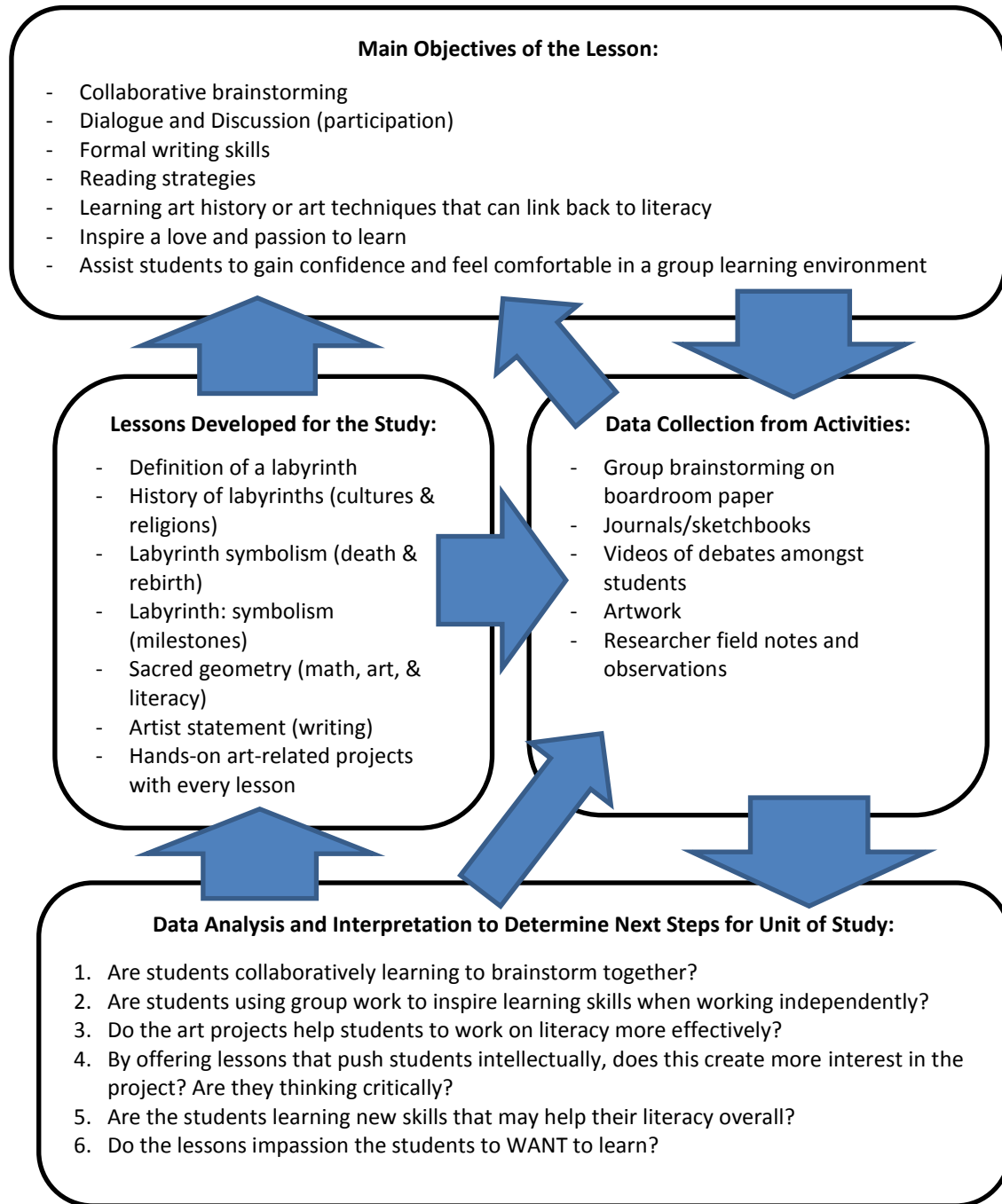


Figure 2. Sample dialectic action research spiral. Diagram based on Honsinger's (2010, p. 58) diagram which was derived from Mills's (2007) diagram.

I critically analyzed the way the phenomenon was experienced by developing the second aspect of phenomenology. The researcher writes research questions that explore the philosophical ideas that the researcher is curious about. “The researcher asks the participants 2 broad, general questions” (Creswell, 2012, p. 61). It was through the journal writing and sketchbooks that I saw how the experience was influenced by bias and attitude towards the experience. By collecting the data, having recorded debates or group discussions and interviews, the third aspect of phenomenological research was fulfilled. Creswell (2012) describes that the investigator collects data from individuals who had experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Typically, this information is collected through long interviews.

I collected the data and then critically analyzed student participant journal notes and drawings that reflect their responses to experiences during the Literacy Labyrinth project. Creswell (2012) wrote that the fourth important aspect of phenomenological research is the process of doing the phenomenological data analysis:

The protocols are divided into statements or horizontalization, the units are transformed into clusters of meaning, tie the transformation together to make a general description of the experience, including textual description, what is experienced and structural description, i.e how it is experienced. (p. 61)

Horizontalization is “the ascribing of equal value to all description and experience.”

(Barnard, McCosker, & Gerber, 1999, p. 223). There are two types of horizontalization—internal and external:

The internal horizon consists of the designated characteristics of a phenomenon, which are based on understanding that is both clear and accepted and which is

delimited in relation to related parts of a concept. The external horizon is the outer boundary of understanding, where explanation and ideas become fuzzy or unclear.

At this level, understanding and experience can be vague and is pre-reflective.

(Barnard et al., 1999, p. 222)

Horizontalization was one of the ways that I looked for similarities and differences in how the phenomenon was experienced. I would look at the way language and attitudes were to describe the experience by using comparison and contrast charts.

After critically analyzing the data, I interpreted the experiences and made acknowledgements to my own bias and viewpoints so the reader would have a chance to see the way in which all phenomena were experienced. It was my hopes that the analysis could offer insight into how marginalized students may experience a phenomenon and how educators might be able to adjust to the delivery of lessons or communication to students in such a way that they become engaged learners.

Through this exploratory research project and the data collected qualitatively with the aforementioned methodology, the desired results was that some integral questions about pedagogy, curriculum design, and effectively engaging students in literacy would be addressed. The main questions for this research were to discover how we could create successes with students who seemed to be headed to deviant cultures in our society. During the Literacy Labyrinth project, the following research question and sub-questions framed my research: What are the experiences of marginalized youth in an arts-based literacy project? How does community play a role in this project? In what ways does my reflexivity as a visual arts teacher and my work with marginalized youth play a role in the research?

Site and Participant Selection

The experiences working with pre-adolescent youth at risk with the Graffiti Art Peace Project lead me to believe that students need long-term efforts from the part of educators to make meaningful changes. My focus for the Literacy Labyrinth was to offer a chance for change to student participants who are in high school or nearing graduation. The three student participants whom I had selected for the Literacy Labyrinth research project were individuals who traditionally excluded from formal education through discipline from educational or other authority figures. These students normally rejected formal education due to cultural, socio-economic, peer or familial influence, identity, behavioural issues, and/or inability to conform to standard classroom curriculum or pedagogy. They had a history of low literacy, deviancy, and/or been disciplined (e.g., suspended, expelled, charged by police for deviancy, or spent time in juvenile hall). Resulting in their marginalization through behaviour and resistance to education, most student participants selected had acknowledged that they have been identified as excluded in some way from the dominant sector of society. They lacked any cultural capital and did not envision themselves as candidates for postsecondary education or vocational training after completing high school. From the group of students, I based my research on the data collected from the three participants who were involved in the final Literacy Labyrinth project. I found it important to compare and contrast the way the three student participants interacted with the lessons and with each other during the learning processes.

The Literacy Labyrinth learning environment would be in a multitude of spaces alternative to conventional classrooms spaces. Students met and learn on the stage or in

the gymnasium, in the cafeteria, or an art room. The spaces were fairly unstructured to allow students to feel comfortable and eliminate any excessive impressions of authority and control of physical space. Due to my strong beliefs and influences on outdoor learning, I planned that at least half of the classes would be taught outdoors. An important component to the project was that student participants' create written commentary and acknowledgement of how the learning environment affected how they were able to be engaged in learning. The researcher continuously observed student participant involvement in lessons and activities and the resulting effects of alternative learning environments through use of field notes, video, and voice recorder. When student participants are recorded, their faces and voices were shielded digitally to uphold confidentiality obligations.

Ethics

Ethical considerations were made in respect to my participants during my research based on action research. I followed the guidelines and expectations of the Brock University REB and Health and Safety Board. The certificate 14-179 - ROWSELL is located in appendix H. There was a requirement for me to be able to work with students on my research project is to cover all the possible ethics issues that the Health and Safety Board and the REB may deem as possible risks. The boards granted approval for me to conduct research with a group of students who are low literacy learners who resist formal educational practices and spaces. The students were taught literacy through arts-based methods studying labyrinths. I collected data based on journals, sketchbooks, formal written responses, videos and/or voice recordings, artwork, and my own field notes and observations (visual analysis). Students concluded the project with an

interview, which can be found in appendix G, where students gave responses on their experiences of literacy and learning, and the process of the research with regards to how it impacted their lives.

Participants

All participants were adolescent youths who resisted literacy in formal educational practices and spaces. My criteria for selecting the participants were:

1. Living in Draw Port in low socio-economic standing
2. Resistant to literacy
3. Have a history of deviancy or considered “at-risk”
4. Participants’ age will be at a high-school level
5. Sample group will be three students in total (two male, one female).

During the research at the Draw Port Public Library, all three students were present for the duration of most classes. Although the students are not extremely “at-risk,” I would argue that the risk of not intervening with their literacy is that they would have less than standard literacy rates by graduation and limited opportunities to be accepted into postsecondary institutions. Students had varying background cultures, such as non-practicing Muslim/Catholic Filipino, and multi-generational Draw Port Caucasian. Students ranged in age from grade 8 to grade 11. Two students are from a low socio-economic household with both parents attaining little or no postsecondary education, while one student is from a family that started at a very low socio-economic status, but as the parents went to postsecondary, they moved up into an upper-middle class socio-economic status. All students will be referred to with pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Gaining Consent

All students were given a consent/assent form to sign which explained how their participation will be used in research. All students were expressly offered the option to withdraw at any point in the process of the research. The parents or guardians of participants were all given consent forms to sign so they legally allowed the participants to be actively a part of the research. All forms were given to Dr. Jennifer Rowsell to be held in a locked drawer for security purposes.

Data Collection

Students attended four Saturday afternoon classes at the Draw Port Public Library. The afternoon classes were the basis of my research. When students completed their literacy and art-based projects, I collected all of their work for analysis as well as integrated my own anecdotal notes and observations. During the fifth week, students completed an exit set of interview questions that I added to my data and used to contemplate the entire research project.

Data Analysis

During the data analysis, I worked with Dr. Jennifer Rowsell, who acted as my critical friend. Normally, a critical friend is an individual of the same professional background as the researcher who is conducting the research. It was unusual to have a professor/supervisor as a critical friend but I agreed since it was at the suggestion of Dr. Rowsell and she has similar interests with regards to the research that I am conducting. It was a great honour to have her involved in the class as a critical friend. We conducted action research methodology. As a critical friend and academic supervisor, she guided me in the process of this particular method of research. We analyzed all visual data,

anecdotal notes, and interviews as well as exit interview questions. I used constant comparison and NVivo in Dr. Rowsell's lab.

Research Design

There were no formal tests as the data collected were based on qualitative records. Student learning and success was based on quality of written work by the students, their journal written responses, and my field notes. Students participated in a literacy class that was set up to appear like a Visual Arts class that was planning to be involved in a large earthwork labyrinth project for the beautification of Draw Port. I collected data based on the lessons each week. Students provided journals, sketchbooks, written responses, and artwork. I wrote anecdotal comments with regards to my observations as well. All research was conducted with and an action research model based in grounded theory.

Observations were conducted by student researchers through field notes, video, and voice recorder. Students who were selected and became committed to participate will generally have a history of having no voice with regards to power of authority. The researcher took into account that there could have been some resistance to leadership from the facilitator. As well, they may have wanted a continuance of their identities that have been formed based on past negative actions which the researcher considered as a possibility to contend with supporting the students with such a shift.

As Freire's (1993) identification for the personal experience of teaching as a political act and for gaining a voice in research about critical pedagogy and conscientization emphasize, education—including or perhaps most fundamentally at the classroom level—is vital as the basis for political engagement and radical social change. To paraphrase bell hooks, the classroom is still a radical space of possibility (Brydon-

Miller & Maguire, 2009).

Students in this program have used their actions and voices to be heard in negative ways although for the most part it was because they want positive change. When they learn that they do have power and learn the ways in which they can produce change, my hypothesis is that they will become a positive catalyst of change. Their life course may be altered because of the acknowledgement of opportunities and possibilities for themselves.

Literacy Labyrinth Implementation

The location of this project will be based at the Draw Port Public Library, located in Draw Port, Ontario. Students were selected based from the pilot project they participated in at the Helping Hands community centre. The target sample group will be chosen based on the responses in the preliminary questionnaire that was used to recruit student participants in the pilot project. All student participants were required to do the same activities, which were analyzed for the final results. Lesson plans were created so that this project if deemed successful could easily be replicated. Copies of the lesson plans and all additional material such as handouts, Powerpoints, or visual aids were documented and included in the appendices: A, B, C, D, E and F. The lesson plans offered differing ways to approach teaching depending on the level or resistance of the group. This way, alternate dealings of events helped support the teacher to keep the level of classroom environment open, honest, and creative so that trust between student and teacher arises.

The data collected in the formal research conducted in the second group of sessions with the student participants presented the results of the Literacy Labyrinth

research. At the library, we continued to work on literacy and planning the labyrinth design as a central theme in the project. Because of time restraints and lack of funding, the culminative art project was individual plans and a painting of a labyrinth as planned by each student participant. Research was be conducted as an action research design and data was be analyzed as such.

Ethical Considerations

There are several considerations to attend to when developing and implementing a project such as the Literacy Labyrinth. All participants were made aware of their rights and that at any time if they so wish may withdraw from the project knowing full well that all data collected would be destroyed. All participants who were committed to see through to the end of the project would have data saved in a secure location. That location will be in the office of Dr. Jennifer Rowsell at Brock University in the Faculty of Education Department. Hard copies of data were secured by lock and key, and conversely electronic copies was secured electronically and accessed only by a password known by Dr. Rowsell and myself. During the whole project, no student participant had their identity revealed. All video and voice recordings were digitally protected to uphold the promise of anonymity. All student participants must feel safe and if ever there was a compromise of their comfort in participating or sharing ideas, they were not pressured or coerced into complying with the objectives of the lesson for that day. Students could choose not to participate without any recourse, but may stay to observe and perhaps participate in the next activity. At the end of the project a report written was produced with the results and insights to this qualitative research project.

Grounded Theory

My research was conducted through the method of action research and the methods was based on grounded theory, which consists of “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). There are three main grounded theory designs: systematic, emerging, and constructivist (Creswell, 2015). Of the three designs, the systematic design best fits the requirements of my research project. This involved “the use of data analysis steps of open, axial, and selective coding and the development of a logic paradigm or a visual picture of the theory generated” (Creswell, 2015, p. 427).

Data analysis was conducted through grounded theory. I was involved with implementing participant observation. Therefore, I conducted fieldwork or immersed myself within the test group’s community and worked alongside participants. I interviewed student participants formally at the beginning and end of the project. Participants were also informally interviewed throughout the project and process. I collected artifacts and texts while involved with the participants of the literacy labyrinth project. During the process of analyzing data, I used one or all three coding methods.

The coding methods are open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The first phase encompasses open coding. This is where the researcher creates categories on all data collected. This included all interviews, journals, written work, artwork, sketchbooks, conversations, and field notes. The second phase would involve axial coding. This coding would discuss the results and consequences of applied strategies. The researcher would draw a diagram (the coding paradigm) to illustrate the affinity between “causal conditions, strategies, contextual and intervening

conditions, and consequences” (Creswell, 2015, p. 429). The six categories of this paradigm are as follows:

1. Causal conditions
2. Context
3. Core category
4. Intervening conditions
5. Strategies
6. Consequences. (Creswell, 2015, 429)

Selective coding is the third phase of coding. “In selective coding, the grounded theorist writes a theory from the interrelationship of the categories in the axial coding model” (Creswell, 2015, p. 429). This was the area where I include the story line of the whole research project. Although I wrote somewhat of a narrative, I also critically analyzed events and described factors that helped me choose certain strategies with potential consequences. The coding process “distills data, sorts them, and gives us a handle for making comparisons with other segments of data” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 3). Grounded theory assisted me to organize my qualitative data so that it could be critically analyzed and create insights to the observations and events that were recorded.

Conclusion

The objective of this research was to develop curriculum that offered educators new strategies and alternative ways to look at the world rather than look at the word. This idea is influenced by Paulo Freire who coined the phrase “reading the world before reading the word” (Nutshell Biographies Center for Learning Through Community Service, n.d., para. 1). Freire wanted to teach his students about the world and why literacy is important. Conversely, my goal is for teachers to become more aware of their

students' needs and the world in which is their reality. My argument is that teachers must become aware of adapting themselves into the world of the student to make connections and lead them on a positive path. The connections to that which they feel comfortable can be a great starting point to make change. Looking at their world rather than the word invites teachers to stray from following structured, formalized curriculum and learning spaces. They move into a way of being creative and adaptable to teach in whichever method and environment that best suits the needs of the student. A qualitative research study was best design for a research project such as this. It looked at the human aspects of growth development and individual history. By doing this, educators can observe the human needs of youth at risk and create safe, nurturing environments that help develop a love of learning and foster the desire to develop literacy skills.

The Literacy Labyrinth had too many writing exercises and projects planned within the time restraints of each lesson. It is very important to keep in mind that process-based learning precedes product-based learning for students who are resistant to formal education. The pressure of making the grade, completing the task, or upholding some assumed unachievable teacher expectation on the student will only assist the student to be defeated before even starting. In the future, time should be slated to developing critical thinking segments within lessons to help students to actively think through their choices to resist learning. Daily narratives or autobiographical journals should be written by students and educators to assist with critically thinking and reflection. More action should be taken in paying attention to documenting relational occurrences as a body of students' progress through a class to critically analyze crucial moments where educators could step in to address the moments of resistance.

Given the history of at-risk students, it was important to recognize their identity in other ways from their self-proclaimed status excluded from the dominant group. Offering projects based on identifying students as leaders amongst their peers helped to deflate the negative identity and offered a way to gain respect and acknowledgement from the community.

The objective of this project was not just to collect data and find qualitative results to report, but also to create meaningful curriculum that integrated the arts into academic courses. By modelling the class planning and delivery there was a hope that it could be replicated by other educators. This would benefit many students who defiantly resisted formal education and thus could potentially create a path that may lead them into deeper levels of deviancy as an adult. Interdisciplinary lesson plans not only created an atmosphere of creativity and flexibility in learning literacy, but also helped develop the whole student as a positive member of society. Lesson plans were structured in such a way that the educator could offer different levels of participation from the student depending on his or her willingness to be involved with the activity. Even with the different levels of participation, the educator would still achieve objectives of each lesson for the day. With the development of the lessons, some of the questions that could be addressed in the future are: How can educators create natural environments indoors when it is impossible to be outdoors especially if students do better in a natural outdoor learning environment? How can educators have the opportunity to teach outdoors when the time constraints are so limited from period to period? How can we restructure classroom environments to develop a less structured and flexible environment for

students? Can educators develop arts-infused curriculum that can address multiple governmental educational expectations with success?

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This chapter describes at greater length my data collection and provides information about the three case studies as telling examples. Through data collection, I discovered how much of the theories discussed earlier were applied and how they had an impact on myself as an educator and my students during the project. The narratives and results describes how each of the three case studies responded to my teaching methods through the strategies based on the theories I have researched.

Data Collection Process

During each class, I would set up a brainstorming activity. The whole group had to contribute to a word-web (see Figure 3) which set the theme of the lesson. This process helped students to collectively begin to think about the theme of the lesson and to drop any outside influences or activities that may have distracted them from being focused. This was an informal way for students to begin sharing ideas and participating. We often would make jokes and silly comments along with the serious comments and that made it okay to take a risk and say something outlandish. If the class was completely serious about this activity, the students would only have said or shared what they know without a doubt to be true. The brainstorming activity would be placed on the wall for everyone to see how their ideas created a visual dialogue and was the catalyst for the rest of the class.

From there, the class was scheduled between academic literacy-building and art making. Usually I would plan for equal amounts of time between. Often I would try to blend art and literacy activities together. In this way, students would have a more difficult time distinguishing what was considered fun (art-making) and what was actually work (reading or writing).

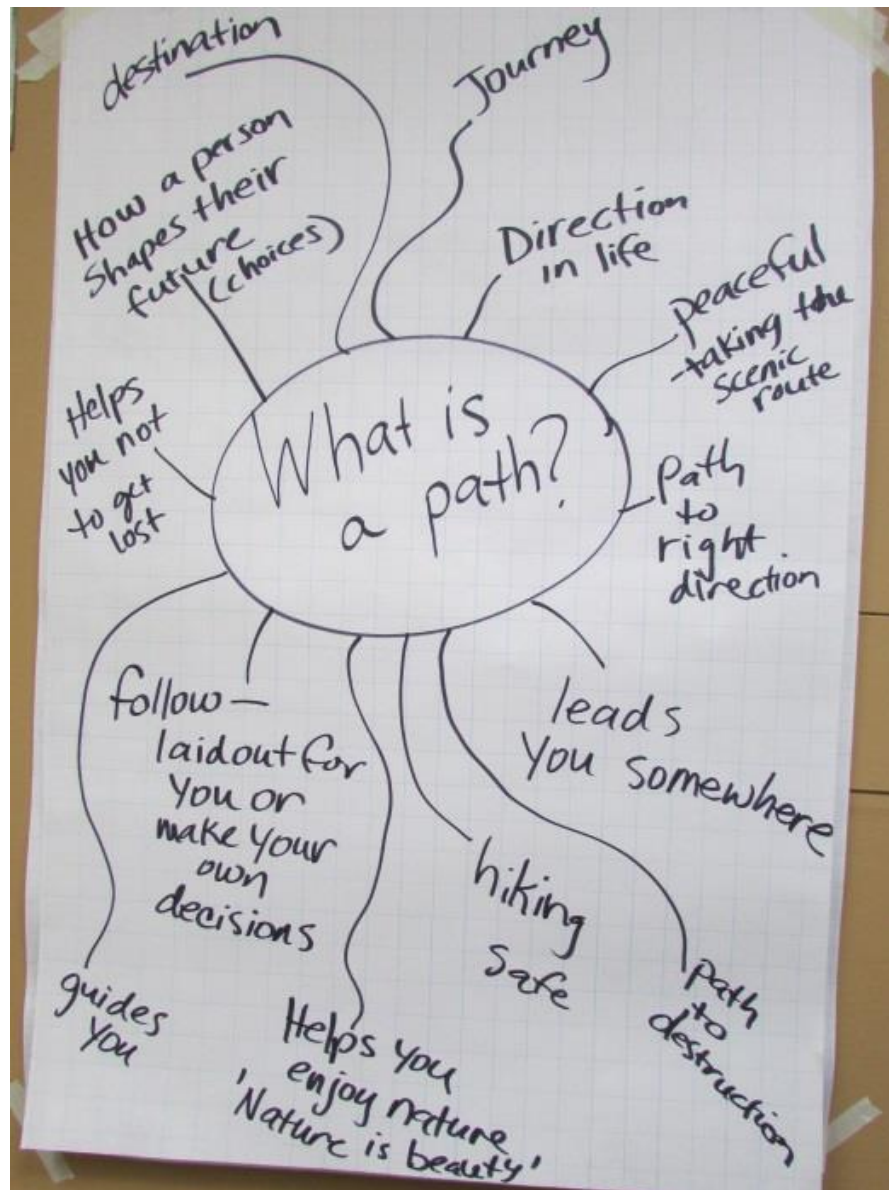


Figure 3. Collaborative word-web. Students would begin each class collectively risk-taking by sharing ideas and participating openly.

I hoped that eventually the two (art and literacy) would be synonymous for one another. My process of data collection was in the readings, journals, sketches, formal and informal writing, and of course all art produced. I also made journal notes and recorded conversations that occurred between students. At the end of the project, students answered a series of interview questions that provided feedback on the impact this project had on the student participants. The following students that I will discuss will be identified with a pseudonym to protect their identity. Their pseudonym names are Wesley, Isaac, and Kristina.

Wesley

Originally, Wesley came because his parents felt he would benefit from this project. Wesley has low literacy skills and came from a school in the United States that apparently had many at-risk students. Wesley's main concern before coming to Canada was to survive the hallways of his school. He mentioned violence amongst peers mostly. His academic work did not seem as important as his ability to survive daily with interactions with his peers.

Wesley was a passive student and did not have much confidence in his academic abilities. He seemed to be alright with low academic levels, and did not have goals set for after graduation. Most of his successes or failures in school seemed to be directly related on whether he liked the teacher or not.

Wesley has ability to do much better in school, but he lacked basic literacy skills. Some of these include: brainstorming, organizing his thoughts, and knowing and implementing foundational writing skills such as paragraph structure. At the beginning of the project, he was very vague and seemed to take a long time to write only a few

sentences. Often he did not do all the writing assignments if there was more than one topic because he needed the extra time to complete the first writing exercise. Wesley did improve in his literacy skills during the duration of the pilot project to the end of the research project, but he needed more time and support so that he could apply this knowledge consistently at school.

Although he appreciated the new literacy strategies and applied them during the sessions, Wesley said that because he is now in grade 11, he felt that much of the literacy skills I attempted to teach him were for elementary kids. He minimized the effectiveness of using the strategies because he felt he would be judged in a poor light by his peers at school. For instance, when discussing the word-web, he did not seem to acknowledge the importance of organizing his ideas before writing. His overall attitude about assignments was to complete them and he did not appear very concerned about revising his work or doing his best. When I asked him how he was doing in school, he felt a 60% average was very good for him. From the work and insightfulness he exhibited during our sessions, it was obvious to me that he could achieve much better than his current grade standing.

When he became engaged and involved with participating in the class, Wesley was very interested in the lessons. Once he had made a rapport with me as the teacher and with the other students, he seemed to be more interested in being involved and participating. He seemed to be more motivated when I taught in a less formal way and involved him in the lessons such as group brain-storming activities and pre-lesson discussions. It was important for me to pay close attention to my students' needs and responded in kind as I encouraged them to learn (Ruddick, 2007). Practicing strategies of maternal pedagogy was extremely important to encourage Wesley to become engaged in the lessons. He responded well to

care theory and often hid his low confidence about his academic ability through humour. The humour was received well, but I turned it around and encouraged him to acknowledge the value of his ability and his ideas while he participated. Humour and food seemed to keep his attention and interest. Overall, he was reluctant to try new strategies, and often was afraid to take risks.

While doing artwork, Wesley had a lot of fear about making a mistake with the drawings and the paint. He grumbled about making decisions for himself. Overall, Wesley was a very passive student and preferred to be told what to do at every step of the way. One of the biggest influences that Wesley received throughout the project was the second aspect of the three demands of maternal pedagogy: “the preservation of life, growth both educational and personal, and training and social acceptance” (Ruddick, 2007, p. 98). Wesley needed support on independently making decisions. The task at hand which he would continuously ask for input was symptomatic of how he dealt with life in general. He did not have any goals or aspirations. It seemed he liked to do what was expected of him with no reasons as to why he should do it or discover how applying himself would build to something bigger in his life. Of all three participants, food did not influence his attendance as much as feeling included and cared about. He seemed to need social support and was encouraged when his peers would value his ideas.

Wesley needed a lot of time and practice to start to enjoy and value journaling. When he first arrived as a participant, he wrote very little and did not share his true feeling about any subject. He seemed to write only what he would guess would be appropriate and predictable to what the teacher would be looking for. He seemed somewhat surprised during discussions that anyone would debate or argue points that I or

anyone else suggested. Near the end of the second gathering in the fall, he seemed more open to write honestly about his experiences. With the time invested in the group and knowing me better as a teacher, there was trust built and his responses reflected that of someone who was unconditionally cared for and he knew his ideas were not judged in any adverse way.

In his exit interview, on question 4, I asked him if he learned anything about literacy during the time he participated in the project. Wesley was reluctant to say that he learned anything new, but that he noticed practicing helped him to improve: “I didn’t really learn anything new, but I think my writing skills are improving because this is like a practice period for writing. The word-webs were kind of new because I don’t do word-webs too often.”

Although he did not consciously realize it, the brainstorming and pre-writing activities helped him to develop and organize his ideas and that was why his writing began to improve. Later on in the interview, he mentioned word-webs again. He mentioned that his high school English class does not use word-webs very often. Perhaps this is an indication that there is a need to review pre-writing activities in the classroom at a high school level before doing written assignments.

Wesley’s Art Experience

Wesley was extremely excited about painting until after the canvas was unwrapped and he had to start mapping out the sketch and draw it on his canvas to prepare to paint. He continuously was commenting that his painting (see Figure 4) was ruined even though I told him the pencil marks are just a way to organize his composition. He would eventually paint over all the pencil lines. I had told him to simply



Figure 4. Wesley's culminating art piece. He practiced risk-taking and experimentation with this painting. Through the painting he could make connections to the risk-taking he experienced during the writing exercises.

make a few lines to map out the positioning of his image but he meticulously drew the whole image.

It was extremely important that Wesley had the acceptance of the group. Every perceived error appeared to be a beacon of exclusion for Wesley. He needed to know that he was accepted and that our group was unified in supporting one another no matter what the outcome of any of the individual projects (Mogadime et al., 2010). When I had students brainstorm about where they would put their labyrinth, we brainstormed outlandish places. Eventually, Wesley thought that it would be a powerful statement to have a labyrinth on the belly of a bear. He imagined what courage it would take to traverse the path, even by merely looking at it. It took much longer than necessary to draw the image on the canvas because he wanted it absolutely perfect—so perfect that he continually erased and redrew the image several times on the canvas. Once he began painting, his anxiety was even more intense.

Dr. Jennifer Rowsell was visiting to offer critical feedback during this class. She was very involved with the group and they enjoyed her presence. Wesley discussed his anxiety with her and asked several times for advice as far as choosing the right colour or developing the quality of lines in and around the bear. He responded negatively to the fact that all the materials were professional artist grade. As a result, the professional grade materials made him apprehensive to make the art for fear of making it wrong. He continually received feedback and eventually turned to his peers for advice as to choosing colour, line quality, and texture, so that his painting would be acceptable. He did this so much that I am not sure if he chose anything beyond the basic image. He also had a physical displeasure to the canvas moving as he painted on the surface. The canvas will

bounce slightly to the pressure of the brush moving along it. This created unpredictability with the paint which was not pleasant for Wesley. He wanted complete control of the art piece, which was ironic since he did not really know what he was doing. He had little or no experience with painting on canvas. Wesley was the only participant that stayed long afterwards to learn more about painting techniques and to complete his painting. He was very anxious, but also had a lot of pride in what he was doing. Of all the students, I could envision Wesley taking more art classes because it stirred an interest in him beyond the project itself.

Once the painting was finished, Wesley was very happy with the results which he expressed in the exit interview:

I am happy that my finished painting will be on canvas. I enjoyed making my painting, it was a fun experience and I would probably do something like this again in the future. I struggle with the thought of me messing up during the process of making art.

He was very self-critical which was increasingly apparent when his dad came to pick him up. He really wanted consistent lines outlining the bear, so he stayed after the class was finished and painted over it several times, learning a technique to keep a consistent line. His dad inadvertently made an erroneous comment when he said that the animal was a nice pig although in actuality it was a bear. This appeared to create great offense. Also, earlier during the class, the other participants made comments that the perspective was out since the arms of the bear were too short. Initially, he took it very personally because he only valued the artwork if he was able to represent the bear as a photographic representation.

Wesley needed to be nurtured and allow himself to be vulnerable in this new experience. Maternalist pedagogy supports the teacher “to foster growth ... [which] is to sponsor or nurture a child’s unfolding, expanding material spirit” (Ruddick, 2007, p. 98). I discussed his feelings of inadequacy with regards to his artwork. I helped him acknowledge that what he is creating is a painting, so it will look different from a photo.

Isaac

Isaac initially disclosed that he wanted to attend the Literacy Labyrinth project only because he needed volunteer hours as a graduation requirement. He was definitely the class clown and did everything possible when he first attended to be a distraction and prevent the others from learning. He had a wonderful sense of humour and did not value learning or developing literacy skills. He would not divulge his grades that he received in school and did not seem to be very interested in attending classes.

Isaac had low literacy skills in reading and writing. He exhibited difficulty in sounding out words and his fluency appeared to need a lot of help. As well, he had difficulty with tracking and often jumped from line to line. He tended to add or skip words as he read. While reading, Isaac had difficulty with comprehension since he was unable to decode words and low fluency impacted how well he was able to read the text. In writing, Isaac needed assistance with basic sentence structure, brainstorming, and pre-organizing his written work. He did not know what the structure of a paragraph was, and for the most part, was unwilling to write a paragraph. Isaac also had poor fine motor skills; his handwriting was very slow and he shaped his letters quite large and the formation was rudimentary. It seemed as though it took a long time to write and so he did not include much detail or expression. From my observations, Isaac had low self-esteem,

and did not take learning seriously because he did not believe that he was able to achieve the same level of literacy as that of his peers.

When teaching Isaac, I became as silly as him and often would tell him that literacy strategies were “tricks” or a cool way to “do it.” I did not use formal language when talking or teaching him. These strategies often would engage a student like Isaac to try such tricks to see if they work for him. By having the teacher calling the strategies tricks, it connected the student to areas of his life that are removed from academia. Value in learning for some students is beyond the classroom. The less formal I became as a teacher, the less threatened and intimidated he was about the concept I was trying to teach him. He abhorred formal structured writing exercises, but if given informal writing strategies, he would become quite prolific with his writing. Throughout the project, he continually said that he did not learn anything and the only reason he was coming to participate was for the volunteer hours as a graduation requirement. As we neared the end of the project though, he said that he would miss coming since he doesn’t do much at home and every class had been fun and interesting.

Isaac followed the anti-school subculture that Willis referred to:

Willis argued these lads had consciously developed an anti-school or counter school subculture. By being in a subculture the bottom-stream pupils can raise their self-esteem by gaining status in front of their peers. Disrupting lessons, playing up to teachers and breaking as many rules as they can is their way of getting back at the system which has labelled them as failures. (Thompson, 2008, paras. 5-6)

This is a subculture that values the rules and codes of conduct of peers over that of the community, or that of the school culture (Willis, 1979). Isaac did everything in his power

to be distracting and inappropriate during class. Of all the students, I felt that I had the least impact on him with regards to his learning. I found that being informal and making humorous comments rather than chastising his behaviour helped to draw him into the lessons and he became more engaged.

Isaac was much more engaged if I asked him about his informal learning. By asking questions and getting to know his funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005), I would find ways to connect with him and help him become engaged in the project. For example, one Saturday morning, Isaac showed up early and was tired from playing video games almost all night. I asked him questions about the video game, and then we ended up on my computer looking at videos of the mantra song of the video game with animation created by a fan. By watching the video, I could begin to understand some of Isaac's literacy issues. The video would have flashes of the game text that were only partially readable. Most of the text was written grammatically incorrect, and always in fragments. I realized that Isaac may need different forms of writing before he could concentrate on full paragraphs. By looking into his world and the forms of text he would be interacting with, I learned how I could adapt my teaching for his needs. I also developed a connection with Isaac since he felt I cared about him and his interests.

Maternal pedagogy was extremely important in connecting with Isaac. "A caring relationship requires mutuality and the cultivation of ways of achieving this in the various contexts of interdependence in human life" (Held, 2005, p. 53). Food was an immediate and necessary indicator of care and nurturing for Isaac. I continually brought food and water for every class. He never waited until break to get into the cookies. He commented a few times that he was surprised with the fact that I always brought one of his favourite

cookies to class. I personally believe that there is no cookie that is not his favourite! Food immediately made him engaged with the lesson. With Isaac, I definitely applied the three demands of maternal pedagogy: “the preservation of life, growth both educational and personal, and training and social acceptance” (Ruddick, 2007, p. 98). I fed him and made sure he had enough water to stay hydrated. I encouraged both his educational and personal growth by working on his literacy skills and helped him to make good choices as far as sleep and work/study habits. Regarding his training and social life, we would discuss appropriate ways to speak and listen. For the most part, caring theory was the true act of caring. Isaac needed to know he was cared about before he would put any effort in learning.

Upon exiting, Isaac disclosed that he did, in fact, learn a lot of great literacy strategies. I was very interested to see that not only was he able to acknowledge what he learned, but also that he was willing to share it with his peers at school if ever they needed some help. The first written sample provides an example of Isaac’s writing during the class. For every question, I asked for answers with examples and details to explain reasoning. Often his answers (see Figure 5) were one word, fragments, or only a single sentence.

It was very rare to see more than one-sentence answers. The second sample was during the exit interview. He was not present for the last class, so I sent him an electronic copy of the questions and he answered electronically. This is a sample of Isaac’s writing from the exit interview:

Please describe how you feel about your finished painting on canvas? Describe specifically anything you were happy about or struggled with while making the art:

June 25th
The first time I realized I was
working with a team was when I
built a robot. I realized I was
working with a team to build
a robot that does stuff.

Figure 5. Sample of Isaac's early written responses. When first attending the Literacy Labyrinth sessions, Isaac's written responses were extremely brief and simplistic.

I think I did my best to create a labyrinth with a design and colours. I really liked thinking of what to do for my labyrinth and what colours to use. I'm satisfied with my final product because I know that I made it. I'm a bit disappointed that I used a standard labyrinth to make mine though.

I coached him beforehand telling him to use word-webs and that I wanted many more details and examples than the first sample of his writing.

Isaac's Art Experience

Isaac expressed that he did not like art because he proclaimed that he was not good at it, although once we started the project he was extremely engaged. All participants were expected to create a preliminary sketch or rough draft. I encouraged them to play with colour using pencil crayons to practice planning the art. I explained to Isaac that planning the art with preliminary drawings was equivalent to word-webs and organizing our thoughts. He was extremely amused by this since he could see the connection. Isaac was very timid with opening his canvas and was reluctant to experiment with colour. Whenever I witness this, I can see that students have risk-taking issues. Once he started to paint though, he really was engaged with the medium. He was very intuitive with expressive mark-making. His art piece (see Figure 6) was closest to designing a physical labyrinth that could be constructed. His humorous personality created a labyrinth with multiple pathways and hence was not truly a labyrinth, but more of a maze. He was aware of that and I am slightly convinced that it may have been an error that he made while initially mapping it out on the canvas and he then elaborated a story around it. Once he gained confidence in choosing colours and working on composition, Isaac was very brave with his colours. He particularly loved painting polka-dots which were supposed to represent shrubbery and flowers. Isaac discussed the lines of



Figure 6. Isaac's culminating art piece. Isaac's art piece represented a formal garden design. His work was extremely expressive and he enjoyed the experience of risk-taking in an art-making exercise. Isaac would benefit from transferring that enjoyment to taking risks with his literacy skills.

the labyrinth at length with Dr. Jennifer Rowsell. He was amused with the fact that there were too many lines and that it was not a formal labyrinth since there were places where one could get lost. He found the idea of mazes intriguing and so broke the “labyrinth rule” of one path in and one path out.

Kristina

Kristina had strong literacy skills, although I am not sure if she was committed to completing assignments or investigating her knowledge and studies further than the expectations set by the classroom teacher. Although she had great fluency and writing skills, she did not initially know formal paragraph structure. After reviewing paragraph structure and organizational strategies, she did very well with writing. Kristina, although she initially found brainstorming and pre-organizing her ideas helpful, found it better to expediently complete writing assignments without doing so. This often left her being redundant and she did not offer full details or explain herself fully when writing. For a while, she adopted the brainstorming strategy in school as a way to improve her writing. Her classroom teacher remarked at how this strategy really was beneficial and asked where she learned it. She initially said it was helping but in the end, she abandoned the word-web because she said it was too “baby-ish” to be practicing at school. Interestingly though, in the exit interview, she writes that the literacy skills—especially lessons in writing strategies—has helped her:

Did you learn anything about literacy such as: reading, writing, and/or communicating? Please explain.

I learned a lot about reading and writing (mainly writing). When she had us write in our journals, she taught us about different kinds of writing. This has helped me a lot in class.

Overall, I found that Kristina was overconfident with her literacy abilities and was not willing to adopt new strategies if it meant taking her longer to complete the assignment. She was also unwilling to self-edit or rewrite any of her drafts so that they made better sense; however, from what she wrote in her exit interviews, she may self-edit and rewrite for school assignments. I would have to investigate further with that.

Kristina had a tremendous amount of ability, though being that she comes from a community of low-socio economic status, she would need support to focus herself to move beyond her present reality. It seemed to mean a lot to Kristina that I had two university degrees and was working towards my Master of Education since I lived in her neighbourhood. Kristina knew she was cared for and valued during every class and seemed to respond well to knowing that we made a special connection. On the last day, she insisted on giving me a hug even though I resist physical contact like that. She said she wished that the classes would go on longer because she really enjoyed them and she could see how the literacy skills she learned were helping her at school.

Kristina was the personality type that liked to be in control. We discussed on several occasions how every member of our group is important and that we value everyone's voice and opinions. She tried very hard to let all participants share ideas and tried not to dominate the other participants in their participation of activities. She verbalized that this was a new way of doing things and it was sometimes a struggle, but

she could see how her opinion of different concepts changed once she let others be a part of the dialogue.

Kristina's Art Experience

Kristina embraced the whole art experience with fervour. She wanted to do something exciting and different with her labyrinth painting. As a way to encourage creativity, the group had a discussion together about silly ways that labyrinths could be incorporated in everyday living beyond a garden or a public space. As a group they discussed all sorts of silliness like the belly of animals, or to make the labyrinth a tree. Then Kristina came up with the idea to put it on a can of soup (see Figure 7) and mass produce it. If we had had more time together, I would have had her research Andy Warhol. It was exciting to see the creativity from that spontaneous thought. As she sketched her preliminary drawing, she started to plan to write a jingle and sing it at the end of the project as she showed her finished painting. The next week, she was supposed to bring the jingle, but the idea faded, and she did not end up doing it because it was above and beyond the expectations I had set. Kristina's artwork was extremely organized physically, and the paint was controlled and very static. She had used the square labyrinth that all the students had decided on when we did the pilot project at Helping Hands. Kristina mentioned that she still would have liked to make the square Roman design because it was different from what most people would think of a labyrinth. Although the painting is controlled and very organized, it still exudes her humour.

As a teacher, I am always so excited and surprised with the progress and results of any class I teach. Working with these students by teaching them literacy skills

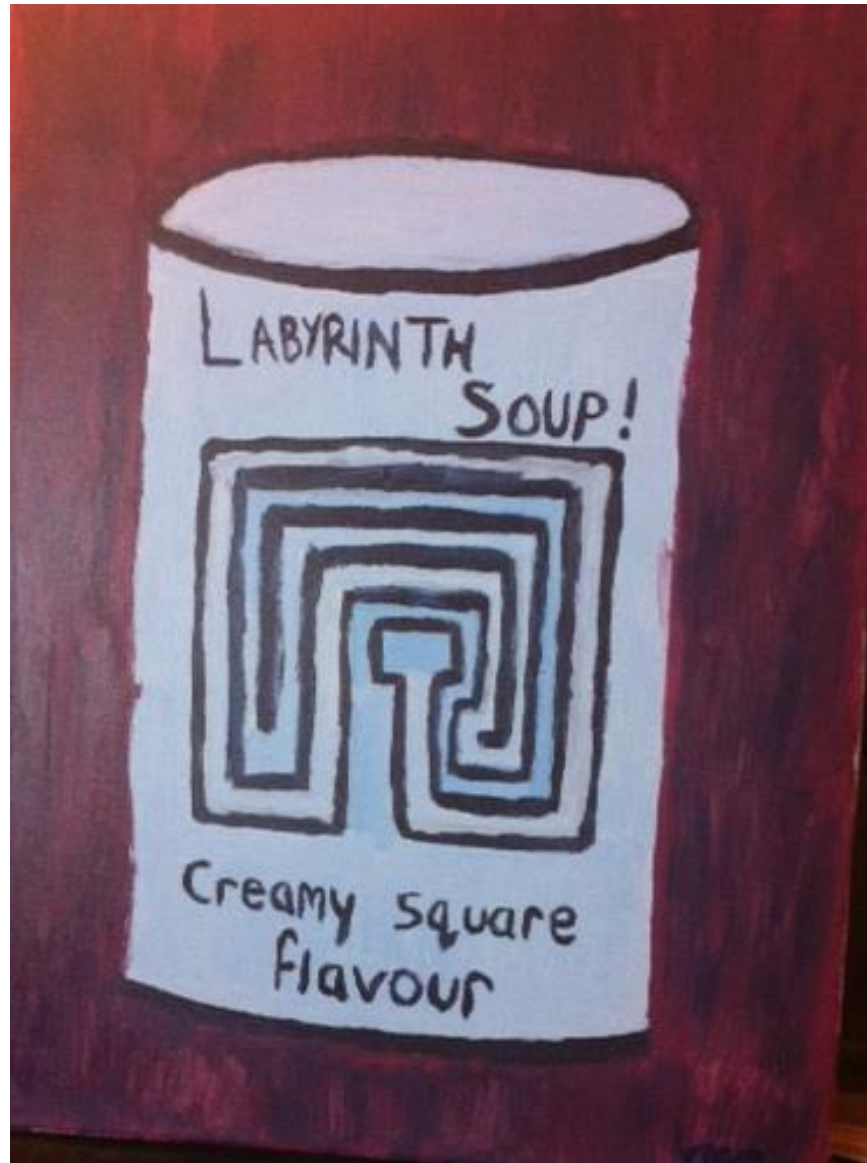


Figure 7. Kristina's culminating art piece. With Kristina's painting, she returned to the idea of the Roman Labyrinth design. This was the original design the student participants were interested in during the pilot project. She wanted the design mass produced so people could experience the square labyrinth "en masse."

through visual arts was probably one of my most satisfying experiences. As an art educator and English teacher, this project had impacted me in particular ways. From my experiences of teaching on the reserve and finding successes with the students there, my intention was to find a way to replicate these successes. I also wanted to find theoretical sources that could help me to have more insight to the way in which my teaching strategies and interaction with students helped to create successes.

As an art and literacy educator, I was affected by how little these students knew about the formal aspects of literacy. I was surprised at how they were able to engage with formal literacy once they did not believe they were actually taking a literacy class. It was interesting to discover how these students either never learned or did not care to learn about literacy strategies such as active reading or brainstorming. This reinforced the fact that I need to emphasize the importance of foundational learning skills when teaching students. The greatest impact was that I found it important for me to love and care for my students. More than anything, having invested interest in my students' lives created a connection where they would want to try because they knew I supported and believed in them completely. As an educator, I valued instilling creativity, fun, and an informal learning environment which in turn helped some students to succeed. It reduced the pressure of performing well and allowed my students to investigate and learn for the sake of learning. I also enjoyed having students learn to share ideas together in a non-judging environment. As an educator, it is important to me that I should never make assumptions on the kind of influence I have had on students' lives and the impact on their learning.

Some of my students whom I observed and were not very responsive to certain lessons, appeared to me that I did not influence at all. One of the students was Isaac who

made very powerful statements on what he learned. Here was one of Isaac's reflections of what he learned:

I did learn more about how paragraphs are structured and what free and formal writing are. I am thankful that I've learned how a paragraph is structured so that now when I have to write longer paragraphs, I have a guideline to go about. I also prefer free writing over formal so that I can get my point across quickly without all the writing. The tricks that I learned were to use a ruler and place it under a line that I am reading to keep my eyes on the current line. Another trick was for paragraph building. To help with my paragraphs, I use a word web to organize my ideas and such to help with the structure of the paragraph and to get my point across. I like free writing because I can write less and not worry about it being wrong because it isn't formal writing. In formal writing you must be very specific about the structure of your paragraph and what is put inside.

As an art educator, I was very interested in my students' process to create their artwork. I had some surprises along the way. One instance in particular was during the process of teaching my students how to draw a sacred spiral. The lesson should have been fairly quick, but I soon realized that most of the high school students could not distinguish a square from a rectangle when they drew it. Almost every art project attempted by the students resulted in them being afraid to make a mistake or to be judged for making something that did not seem to be adequately up to standards. When making art, they were not interested initially in the process of creativity. Rather, their interest was in meeting criteria and focusing on controlling the medium and concentrating on the finished product. I emphasized to students to be involved and aware of the process of art-

making. I sometimes focused on their mistakes, just as my student participants would, but instead of seeing the mistakes as a negative would put a positive spin on it. Students were amused by my comments to them that mistakes help make art more interesting.

The student participants benefitted from learning the art historical aspects of labyrinths and it impassioned their desire to learn. It created an interesting learning environment where students could focus on a theme and then write about it based on their own funds of knowledge. By focusing on the themes based on art history, students could debate and share ideas about how they see their world and challenge biased thoughts and ideas that they may have considered to be facts.

Throughout the project, students and I spent time journaling ideas and responses to experiences. I found that although students did have time to reflect and respond privately, many of our greatest discussions happened while students practiced as a group with word-webs. As the project continued, students began to use word-webs to stimulate thoughts and reflexivity with responses to topics or experiences.

I consistently followed the three demands of maternalist pedagogical theory which is: “the preservation of life, growth both educational and personal, and training and social acceptance” (Ruddick, 2007, p. 98). The preservation of life to me as an educator means that we care for students’ needs and help them to stay happy and healthy. This can be expressed with band-aids, food, water, and mittens. Preservation of life also means making sure you care about habits that would help students to be strong and healthy. Becoming interested in the well-being of a student creates a connection that is nearer to the true meaning of a teacher being *in loco parentis* (“In Loco Parentis,” n.d.). I take that

term very seriously since I had legal responsibility to the student while they are in my charge.

When I focused on the students' "growth, both educational and personal" (Ruddick, 2007, p.101), I am in fact caring for the future development of the students. While I taught students literacy skills, they also learned all sorts of life skills to help them with future decision-making. The literacy skills covered topics that helped them to role play scenarios that may happen in the future as they mature. For example, some of the students did not see the value of free writing when we first started journaling. They moaned and groaned because they had "nothing" to write. I told them to keep writing the same thing again and again until a new idea popped in their head. After a while, their thoughts became more fluid and they became more open to the creativity of this exercise. When they completed the free writing activity, I then had them highlight ideas and organize them into a formally structured paragraph. This strategy was new and foreign to them, but as they experienced more unfamiliar activities with me, they became open to taking a risk and seeing where the new strategies would take them. More than anything, building on students' skill base helps them to securely experience confidence so they may bravely move on to the next level of learning in their personal path of development.

My basic belief was that the core of teaching was to love rather than be only a facilitator of knowledge. The first and most important part of teaching was to model respect and care for one another. "One becomes a better participant in a better practice of caring, the more the practice employs the most knowledgeable insights available and the better the participant understands these" (Held, 2006, p.54). When creating a classroom environment the first thing I do is create routine activities that draw students together

sharing ideas and being physically involved with one another. Many activities involved physically sharing writing utensils or paper when developing ideas during a lesson. By creating this caring space, students felt safe and knew that they all supported one another. My students responded in a way that often resulted in respect, loyalty, and empathy for others. During the project, students began to support the students who had low self-esteem and encouraged or praised each other when they stepped out of their comfort zone.

For instance, I had the students read an article that was much more sophisticated in language than what they were used to. Some of the students were not comfortable with reading aloud let alone reading material that was above their level. Isaac was the most hesitant. He most likely refused to read aloud in his classroom in school. He did not have good tracking skills and kept skipping lines. This exasperated him, and he made more mistakes because of his rising anxiety. I handed him a ruler and told him to follow the line with the ruler and drop it down a line as he read. He was ashamed that he needed that tool. I told him not to worry since I use that as a tool when I am nervous reading in university. So I took a piece of paper and started to read that way. One of the other students also supported him by saying “Wow! That’s a great trick!” and the latter student started to do it too. Although that student really did not need to use that strategy for tracking, he was encouraging his peer to feel comfortable with a tool he needed to succeed with the oral reading. Isaac then applied the strategy as an acceptable practice and had few errors for the rest of his oral reading for that session. Whatever the curriculum that was being taught, my hope was that students would leave my class having learned how to support one another and use the knowledge they have attained in a

way to benefit humankind.

I am very aware of how exclusion can affect a student's performance academically. My main goal in every classroom was to first develop a sense of care amongst all the students. As I have mentioned earlier about the school-to-prison pipeline, the inclusion of every student must be school-wide. Once students are sent out of a classroom, they are denied an education. It is imperative that while class is in session, the students must be present and attentive. Although I did not have any student participants that had been suspended or expelled (they did not even experience serious disciplinary action), there still should be an important focus on making all students feel included. Isaac had said that he had a very bad time with bullying in school until he had recently moved to another school. Being that he is now in grade 11, I would say that most of his experiences were exclusionary. When a student is suffering from violence like this, it also makes me wonder why the faculty in the school could not have stopped it. From what Wesley had shared from his experiences in school in the United States, he was in an extremely violent school. Although he never mentioned being disciplined, the environment was far from peaceful. Being in an institution where self-preservation supersedes an education, one would have to question: What lessons are really being taught? As far as my participants being disciplined and being excluded from an education, I would have to admit that they were not excluded from a classroom to the best of my knowledge. None of my participants were that deviant to warrant suspension or expulsion from school.

Conclusion: Arts-Based Literacy

As a visual arts teacher and English teacher I always try as much as possible to infuse arts and literacy curriculum with each other. To me, they are inextricably connected and interdependent for success. When teaching visual arts, there is so much to read and write about that it does not do the student justice to only learn about the physical act of making art. The passion comes from the stories and theories based on the unit of study. When teaching literacy, I often encourage students through creative and playful hands-on activities as I did with the literacy labyrinth. Most students felt the project was an art class which they also had to do some reading and writing while attending class.

When teaching students literacy skills, I would often make connections with how many of the skills also were used when creating art. Time and again, students would be requested to write a paragraph on a topic based on the theme of the lesson, and became frustrated that they did not write a perfect paragraph. This was a result of attempting to write with no pre-writing strategies used beforehand. As we moved through the pilot project at Helping Hands to the final project at the Port Draw Public Library, my student participants began to use the strategies that I was teaching them. The more they practiced pre-writing strategies such as brainstorming, free writing, and word-webs, the easier it became for them to put their ideas to paper. Then before starting their assigned writing, they would organize their ideas. When the group finally arrived at the point of beginning their paintings, I had them use the same strategies. Instead using word-webs, brainstorming, they would sketch their ideas and then included images with colour to plan their compositions on their canvases. I helped students to see how easily they could transfer their literacy skills to that of planning their paintings.

Using strategies that are visual and tactile with pre-planning written assignments is much like making artwork or sketches before painting. I discovered that students became more creative and took more risks when they lost track of whether it mattered if they made a mistake. The word-webs and free writing exercises helped to vanquish their fear of risk-taking since nothing during those exercises was judged. Also by making word-webs, the students create visual placements of their ideas which often helps them to map out how to organize their ideas before they start writing.

Arts-based literacy also gave students time to balance academic and hands-on activities and offered a way to practice participating verbally about the lesson. Balancing the work of writing with creating some art, which was based on the theme of the lesson or unit was a way to motivate students. It also offered time to verbalize and share ideas about the lesson objective since art making was rarely a quiet time. Students practiced debate, in-class participation of ideas, and learned how to express clearly their viewpoints in a formal way, yet it was still in an informal setting. The creativity and camaraderie of the physical act of making art lowered participants' anxiety of the formal act of in-class discussions and students felt safe. This removed inhibitions about discussing ideas amongst peers.

By blending between creative visual arts and that of literacy, students began to learn in a place that is liminal, which was neither an art class nor an English class but a mixture of both. Although there was a structure to the class so that I could meet my objectives for teaching, students experienced a balance of structure and perceived non-structure throughout each session. Students did not mind formal aspects of learning if they were given time to be less formal. Also, the creativity of making art was messy and

fun. I structured the class in such a way that the “messy fun” became part of the structured writing sessions. As such, the writing then often began to be perceived as fun as well. During some of the journaling exercises, I encouraged student participants to mix drawing images along with their text. Most students did not see the way images could be perceived as extensions of language. It would have required more classes to teach that concept to my students. Most students saw images as a way to write less so their pictures became larger and larger as the writing exercise wore on. At the end of the assignment I teased them about doing this and gave them an additional 10 minutes to make some wrap-around text to clarify their viewpoints. Because I was not punitive with them, it was all taken in a light-hearted manner and students actually wrote more insightfully after the teasing remarks.

The literacy lessons were all based upon the exploration and study of labyrinths. Students looked at them from an art historical and symbolic context, read articles based on labyrinths, or discussed related issues that occurred during planning of the labyrinth. Students had a chance to read and explore poetry based on some of the themes of the labyrinth and discuss and debate issues. All aspects of literacy were from a source of art or art history of labyrinths. In a formal English class, the structure of course material is not based upon any arts-related activities. The difference in my class was that we did not isolate the English learning to just literature and writing. The literacy became alive through an exploration of culture and art. The value of literacy is learning the skills to learn how to explore and discuss topics in which one is interested.

CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH

In this final chapter, I will discuss the results of all my research. I will reveal findings of my research by exploring particular lessons and interactions with my student participants. Some of the findings will be samples of artwork, written responses, journal entries, word-webs, and recorded discussions. I will also discuss the implications of my findings by comparing and connecting the results to my philosophical referencing, theories, and research questions.

The Literacy Labyrinth was a project that taught student participants at many levels. The project was an art and art history class, literacy class, and a class for self-reflection. It was integral to the focus of my project to create an informal, alternative way to teach literacy and maintain student engagement. My goal was to use the labyrinth and themes as a vehicle to connect the student participants with being involved in critically thinking about themselves, their fundamental beliefs, and their community. For every class, I focused on teaching a particular theme or art-related project that would connect to the labyrinth. Some of the lessons were more powerful than others so I included documentation of some of the better lessons along with student participant responses.

Trail Markers (Turning Points)

For the introduction to labyrinths, the students investigated pathways and trail markers (see Appendices A & B). I chose to use trail markers as a way for students to consider times in their lives where they had guidance and direction in the path they would take. My main concern was that they acknowledged that there was interdependency with choices and the direction of their lives. We also investigated different symbolism connected with pathways and trail markers.

Wesley

During the study of pathways and trail markers, Wesley did not participate much. He did not want to be noticed by other students and was incredibly quiet. When it came time to write, he was reluctant to begin. After his second class, he stayed and helped me to clean up the supplies. He enjoyed this time immensely, and was more talkative when the other student participants left. I asked him to describe a paragraph and he could not do so. I began to realize that Wesley may be reluctant to write formally because he may not know how to write confidently in a formal paragraph structure. I also noticed that he had a very hard time coming up with brainstorming ideas. During the class, after much prompting, I finally asked Wesley to use a word-web to describe trail markers (see Figure 7).

The whole concept of putting his ideas to paper was terrifying for Wesley and he seemed worried that anything he wrote down would be incorrect. Creation of the word-web required the whole allotted time for him to create it, so he was unable to transfer the ideas to a paragraph format.

If I were to teach Wesley regularly, I would have him practice foundational writing strategies continually until he became more comfortable with it. For example, if he were to practice word-webs 20 times each week, eventually it would not take him very long to write a word-web in class since he already would have made so many that it would no longer matter if some of the ideas were not as good as others. He would need to practice paragraph writing skills in the same way. He focused too much on the one activity rather than seeing it as one of many. I also would be discussing the “big picture”

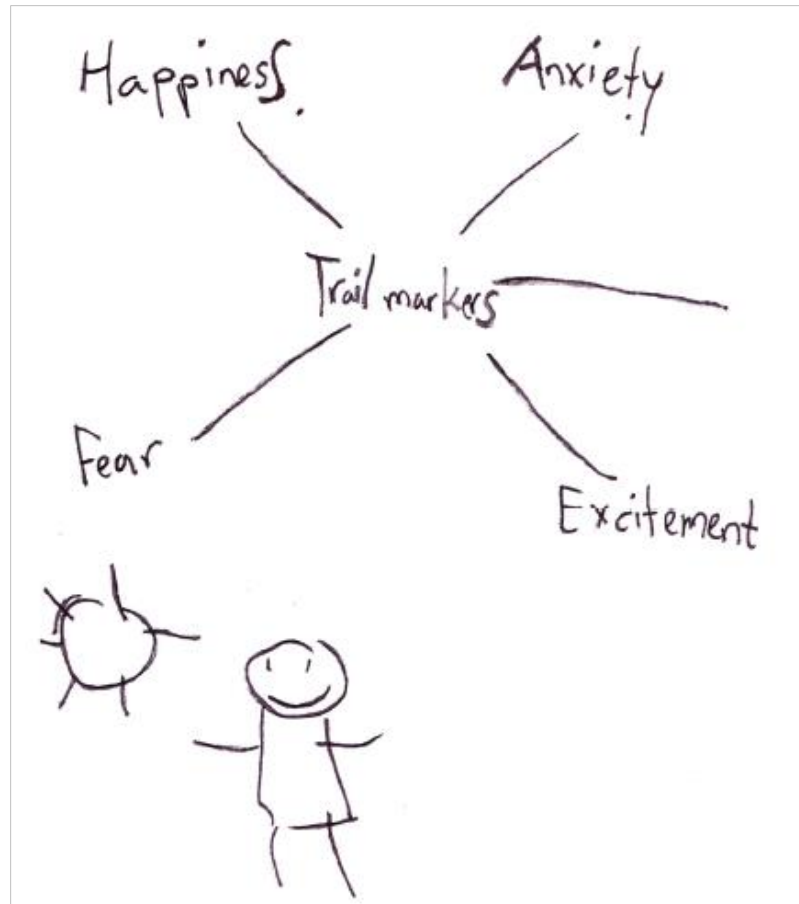


Figure 8. Wesley's word-web. Wesley attempted his first word-web by brainstorming ideas about trail markers. This exercise lasted the entire writing period. It was very difficult for him to express his thoughts since he was so fearful of being wrong. Interestingly, he doodled along with his word-web where the sun appears to represent a smaller word-web.

or the big objectives of learning so he would not get too caught up on little parts of the activities and exercises.

Isaac

Isaac was not very interested in this lesson until we began the art project. Most of the class he exhibited a lot of distracting behaviour and cracked jokes. He seemed to have difficulty in connecting with pivotal moments in his life; as Isaac explained:

A turning point in my life was when I kept doing poorly in school. I decided that I was going to try to do better in school so that I have a job and not be grounded so often. This was a turning point for me because I didn't want to do poorly in school and life.

Trail markers are a guide to lead a person in a certain direction, Isaac had to really work hard at discovering trail markers that guided him through life. The true trail marker would have been the possible event that may have lead him to choose to do better, or mentioning if there was a person who inspired him to make better decisions for his future.

My observations indicated that Isaac would be a much more engaged learner if he had more physical exercises that connected with literacy. For example, if we were to make a trail with trail markers and he experienced it, then he would be able to write about it and make connections. It was clear that Isaac has not had much practice with abstract ideas and so he would need practice by connecting physical experiences to imagined ideas. I also believe that the teacher must have a lot of patience and create a classroom environment that is less structured since Isaac needed to get up and move around the class while he was learning.

Kristina

Studying and contemplating the symbolic meaning of a pathway and coming upon trail markers was extremely profound for Kristina. She was able to participate during group discussions and enjoyed hearing what others in the group had to say. Kristina defined a pathway trail marker as a way “to show that you are going the right way physically and spiritually.” She was always insightful when journaling and added insight to her definition: “just because you might be going the right way physically, it doesn’t always mean that you are going the right way spiritually and mentally.” Kristina wrote about her own personal trail markers (or turning point in life):

A turning point in my life would be when I decided to start eating healthier. I realized that I was growing not just taller, but wider. I knew that people don’t live longer when they are of larger weight and that really scared me. I have started eating healthier. It is a good, smarter path in my life.

This was indicative of how the class discussed the way in which trail markers could be interpreted as a symbol. The symbol represented that which guided all aspects of a person’s life. Just as in the woods, a trail marker may have pointed out different places that would help a person depending upon his needs. For example, the trail marker may point to lodging, washrooms, food, scenic viewpoint, and other places that may be important for the trail goer to find. Kristina concluded on her own that even if someone is on the right path, they may need trail markers in life to lead them to work on specific areas of need.

Kristina was capable of doing more than what was expected of her. As a teacher I would set expectations higher than what she was willing to settle for. An example of her

needing expectations set higher was when she started her Labyrinth Soup painting. While in the brainstorming and sketching phase, she dreamt up how she would present the finished painting. Kristina wanted to incorporate literacy with her painting. Her original idea was to paint the Labyrinth Soup painting and then write a jingle and sing to the class as though it were a TV ad. She decided against doing this by the next week because she said it was too much work and no one else was doing it. She needed structure and expectations set out with clear criteria. This was the difference between “meeting” and “exceeding” expectations.

Kristina worked harder if she was encouraged to independently investigate a topic. She would need study skills and a teacher who would be willing to provide curriculum for independent study. In a classroom setting, she would most likely be more engaged if the assignment changed frequently; for example, creating a presentation, then learning to make a movie script, a written essay, or poster/diorama project. Kristina would do well with lots of stimulation in class along with learning new ways to complete assignments.

Death and Rebirth

Another theme I chose to teach the student participants was the theme of death and rebirth (see Appendices D & E). This was a powerful lesson and made students reflect deeply into their own endings and beginnings. This lesson was symbolic of the path taken when walking the labyrinth, but also it created connections with the transitions of change in the student participants’ lives. Students were encouraged to discuss turning points as a way to connect to the theme of death and rebirth. As a group, they created

these labyrinths. One labyrinth is the symbolic nature of entering the labyrinth when one is aware of negative influences (see Figure 9).

As an individual came to the centre, there would be a transitional change and often an epiphany occurred. Sometimes it occurred after spending time in the centre meditating or contemplating. As the individual leaves the labyrinth, a positive transformation happens (see Figure 10). Students drew two labyrinths and then wrote words expressing the way in (being death) and the way out (as transformation or rebirth).

After they did a group discussion and collaborative art piece, the student participants then turned inwards to reflect on turning points in their own lives. The conscious consideration of endings and beginnings was profound for them and each responded in a different way. I also encouraged students to think of endings and beginnings for their community.

Wesley

Wesley had some difficulty in connecting with the death and rebirth theme. He was extremely literal and somehow uncomfortable talking about changes that happened in his life. To make the writing exercise more palatable for all the students, I asked them to write about a turning point in their lives when they knew that things would never be the same. Wesley wrote about the birth of his brother:

The turning point that I had in my life was when my brother Thomas was born. When I was in the hospital room with my Mom and saw my new, first brother I realized that I am his older brother and that I need to be there for him. This was my turning point because I didn't have a brother before, so I didn't know what it was like.

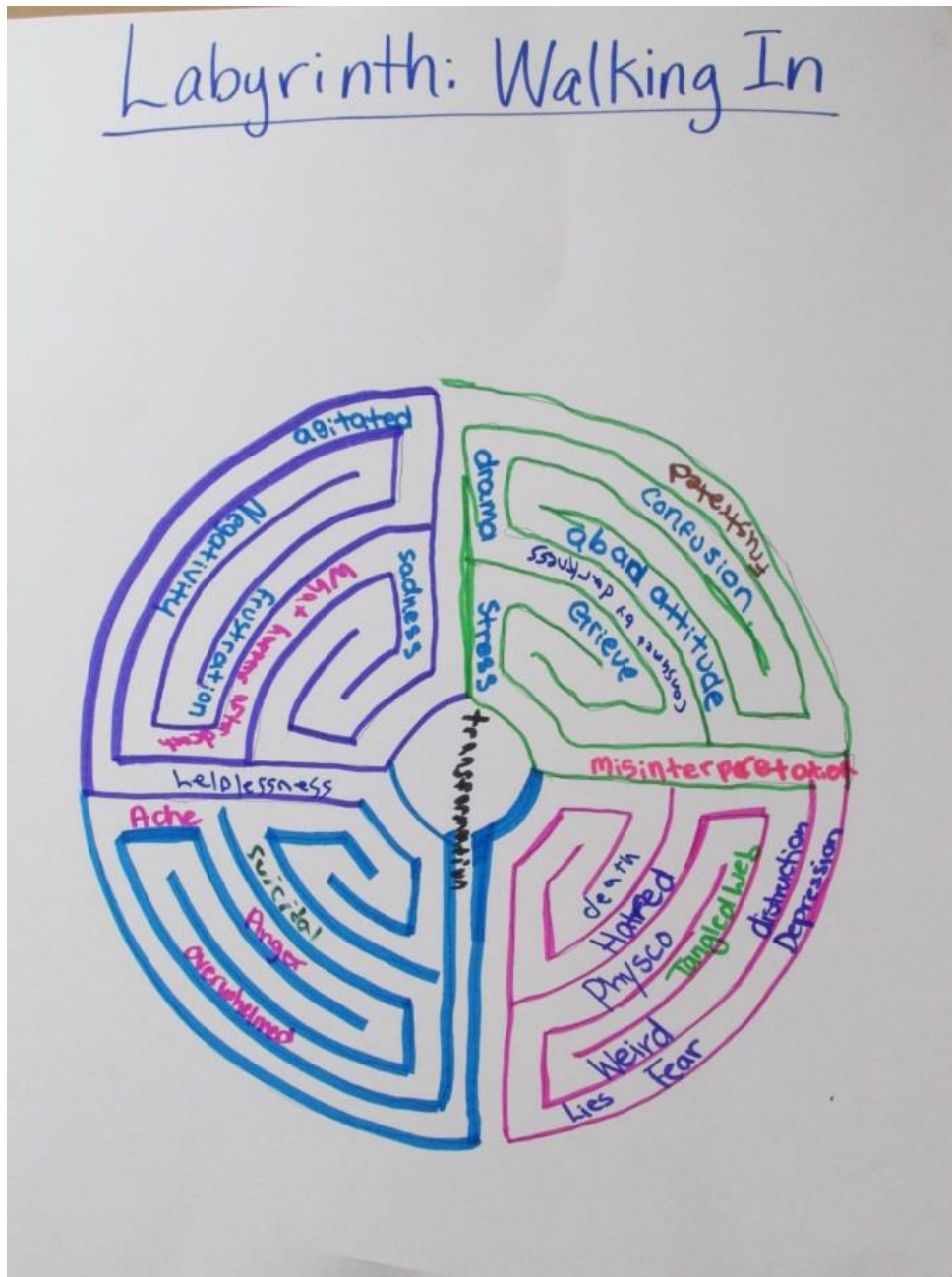


Figure 9. Labyrinth: Walking in. When one is entering the labyrinth, symbolically one becomes aware of the 'death' or negativity that one is carrying.



Figure 10. Labyrinth: Walking out. As an individual reaches the centre of the labyrinth, symbolically it represents transformation to positivity. Walking out of the labyrinth, one becomes cleansed and renewed, thus the symbolic nature of 'rebirth'.

Once I changed the term “death and rebirth” to “turning points,” Wesley was able to identify with the theme. Death and rebirth were terms that he could not connect to as metaphors for changes in one’s life.

Isaac

Isaac was not a very prolific writer. He usually did not include many details and did not use many words overall to describe his point of view. The theme of death and rebirth really impacted Isaac. He immediately rejected the idea because he said he did not believe in reincarnation. As many times as I told him that it was not about reincarnation but rather changes that happen in one’s life, he continued to impress upon me how much he opposes the idea of reincarnation.

Surprisingly, Isaac wrote a lot of opinions and discussed several experiences where he could connect with the theme. Through the dialogue between myself and the class, he became aware of beginnings and endings that he has experienced. I could see that he began to struggle within himself about the predictability of responses of joy and sadness to the theme of death and rebirth with that of his own growing insights. He began to acknowledge some irony. When I asked the students to write and predict what the theme of death and rebirth may mean, this was what Isaac wrote:

Death is at the end of someone or something, life and rebirth is the new beginning of a new one. The emotions felt during death are sadness and reluctance.

Sometimes there may be joy even. The feelings felt during rebirth or birth are happiness and rejoice and such, and a lot of pain for the female.

As we began to collectively discuss the meaning of death and rebirth, Isaac’s ideas began to shift from concrete to abstract. For the next writing exercise, student participants were asked to write about personal deaths and rebirths. Isaac chose to write about his

experiences at school. He describes himself being “severely bullied” for most of his school life. The death was when he was allowed to leave the school and be transferred to another school. His personal rebirth was to be in a new school and finally had been accepted and treated with respect by his peers.

When discussing the theme of death and rebirth with regards to his home community, Draw Port, Isaac was especially passionate. His language was sharp describing and offering his view points about death and rebirth with Draw Port:

Draw Port has many “deaths.” One of which being the amount of homeless people and evil people. We can fix this by putting more money to poverty and drop kicking the evil people off the bridges. This is why Draw Port sucks and we need to fix it.

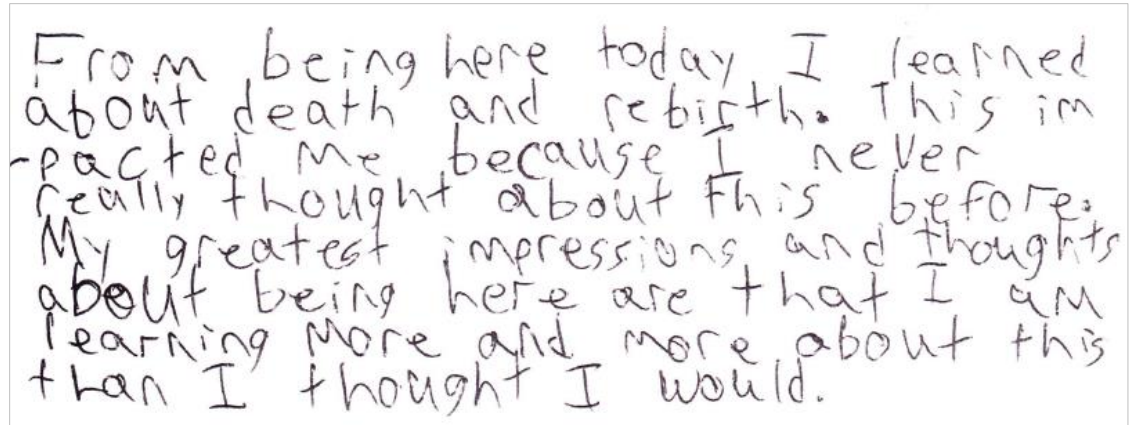
Throughout the lesson, Isaac argued about the theme. He really did not seem to get much out of the class because he was so offended by the topic. Isaac’s exit piece (see Figure 11) describes how he experienced this lesson. The subject was new for him to explore, yet although it was uncomfortable during the class, he seemed to be interested in thinking about new ideas associated with the theme.

Kristina

The theme of death and rebirth immediately intrigued Kristina. She began the class describing it in a very literal sense. She discussed death, as a result of aging, sickness, and a natural process of living. She described rebirth by making analogies to seasons, mowed lawns, and people being cured from illnesses such as depression.

After a discussion about the labyrinth in regards to death and rebirth, Kristina shared her personal experiences of transformation:

A personal death/rebirth in my life would be when I changed schools. My attitude

A photograph of a handwritten note on lined paper. The handwriting is in cursive and somewhat slanted. The text is written in black ink. The paper has faint horizontal lines. The text is as follows:

From being here today I learned
about death and rebirth. This im-
-pacted me because I never
really thought about this before.
My greatest impressions and thoughts
about being here are that I am
learning more and more about this
than I thought I would.

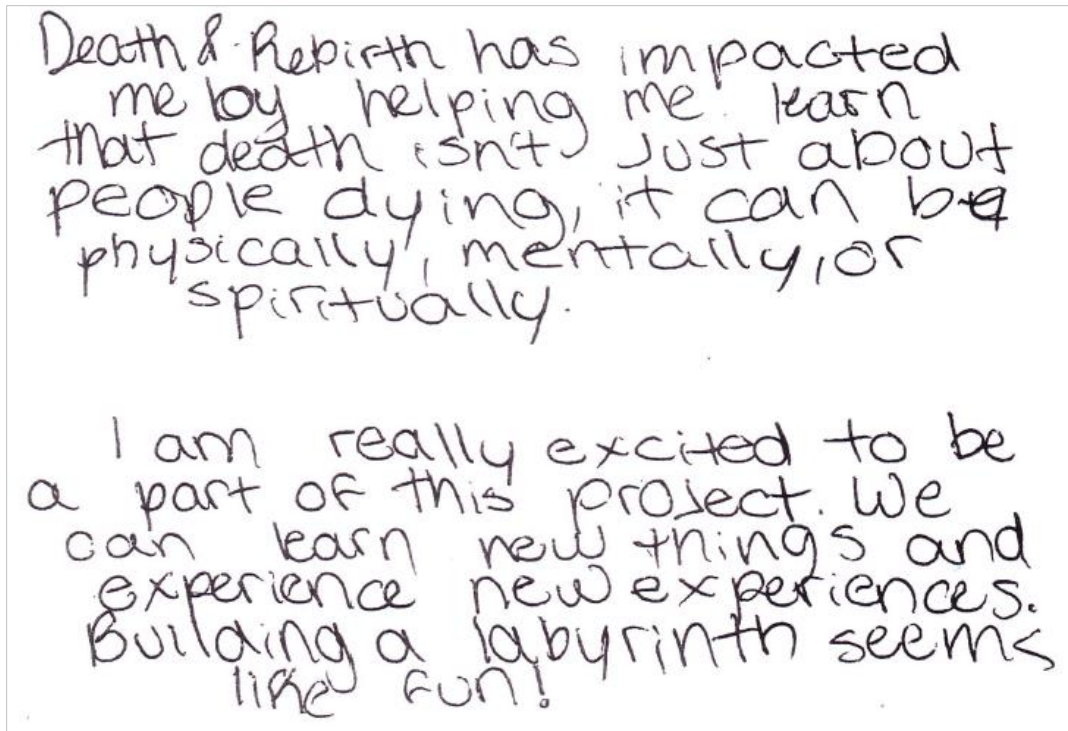
Figure 11. Isaac's writing response. Isaac expressed his struggle with the topic and theme of the session. His ability to express himself is improving since the first few classes.

wasn't very good and I hung out with the wrong people. Changing my school was definitely a big death to my life like leaving all my friends behind but it was also an amazing rebirth to me. I started getting my grades up, my attitude improved and I have some pretty awesome friends. Of course I miss my old friends but this was the right decision. Changing schools was a very influential death and rebirth on my part.

When we began discussing their community and how death and rebirth affected Draw Port, Kristina had very serious opinions. She was extremely verbal as we discussed community issues. For the most part, Kristina felt that the youth were not heard and that their input to changing the community was not valued by those currently in power. This is what Kristina wrote to discuss how the theme of death and rebirth connects with the town of Draw Port:

If there was one thing I could change about Draw Port, it would be the amount of poverty struck people there is. People don't graduate high school or want to get a job or graduate college. This limits their job opportunities. Some people have disabilities and can't work all of these things can lead to poverty. If you don't have a job then you don't get money and can't get a house or car. We should have the government help out with people and their money.

It was clear that Kristina had a much more compassionate view of the problems in Draw Port and wanted to help people out of their current difficult situation. Isaac on the other hand, although caring, saw the necessity to have a tougher stance against the "problem" citizens of Draw Port.



Death & Rebirth has impacted
me by helping me learn
that death isn't just about
people dying, it can be
physically, mentally, or
spiritually.

I am really excited to be
a part of this project. We
can learn new things and
experience new experiences.
Building a labyrinth seems
like fun!

Figure 12. Kristina's writing response. Kristina journals about the impact she experienced in studying the theme of death and rebirth. She freely expresses her feelings at the end of class by elaborating and expresses her feelings about the labyrinth project as a whole.

At the end of the class, everyone was encouraged to write about their impressions about what they learned or reflections about the theme of death and rebirth. This theme affected Kristina as she considered the symbolic nature of life and reality in ways she had not experienced before (see Figure 12).

Sacred Spiral and Sacred Geometry

I planned a lesson on the theme of the sacred spiral and sacred geometry (see Appendix F). The labyrinth is a formalized design of the sacred spiral and it connects the macro and micro to the universe. Students were surprised to learn how the spiral found in a seashell is the same mathematically designed spiral found in the Milky Way. I taught students from an art historical basis about the mathematical applications of the sacred spiral and all students applied the knowledge to make their own sacred spiral by using the formula of sacred geometry.

During the lesson, we discussed how the labyrinth was seen as a sacred space. The students had difficulty in coming to terms with that. So we discussed the word sacred and its meaning. Then we discussed places they know to be sacred. Afterwards, as a writing exercise, I asked students to discuss their own sacred spaces. This was a difficult writing exercise since it appeared that the students were always told what and where sacredness occurs and have never considered their own ideas of what was sacred to them.

I included some poetry in the lesson as a way to describe that which was sacred to oneself. None of the students were excited to see that I had incorporated poetry into the lesson and were quite fearful of reading and interpreting the poems. The poetry helped to illustrate the way personal sacred spaces could be found or acknowledged. I chose two

poems by Henry Thoreau (1960), which spoke to the theme of sacred geometry and sacredness in general:

From Re-Creation

When common man looks into the sky,
which he has not so much profaned, he thinks
It less gross than the Earth, and with reverence
speaks of “the Heavens,” but the seer will in
the same sense speak of “the Earths” and his
Father who is in them. (p. 48)

From Alma Natura

These motions everywhere in nature must
surely be the circulations of God. The flowing
sail, the running stream, the waving tree,
the roving wind—whence else their infinite
health and freedom. I can see nothing so
proper and holy as unrelaxed play and frolic
in this bower God has built for us. The suspicion
of sin never comes to this thought. Oh,
if men felt this they would never build temples
even of marble or diamond, but it would be
sacrilege and prophane, but disport them
forever in this paradise. (p. 8)

Wesley

Wesley took a while to connect with the ideas of sacredness as being a place that one could claim as a personal space. He felt that anything to do with sacredness was always imposed upon him or he was told where to find a sacred space. It was novel for him to consider what was sacred on his own and with his own definition. Wesley seemed to really consider his definition of sacredness and finally wrote about a special place that held important memories for him:

A sacred place in my life would have to be my grandmother’s house in Virginia.

My grandma’s house is in a town that is located in the woods. I consider this to be my sacred place because it is where I grew up until I was about eight years old.

All my friends and family are there so this place is very special to me. Whenever I am at my grandma's house I feel happier than usual and whenever we have to leave I feel sad. My grandma's house is my sacred place and I enjoy being there with my family and friends.

Wesley did not share much about his experience with the poetry. He was very resistant to reading and interpreting the poem although he did participate in group discussions a bit. "This poem says that the motions in nature are infinite and free. The motions of nature are considered paradise to Henry Thoreau" (Wesley). His comments to the poem in relation to learning about sacred geometry and sacred spiritual spaces did not show many connections to the poetry. I found overall, that Wesley needed a lot of support in brainstorming and taking risks when writing his ideas.

Isaac

When I introduced the concept of sacred spaces and sacred places, Isaac went directly into protective mode. He was absolutely sure I was trying to assert my own religious beliefs upon him. We discussed the definition between sacredness and religious dogma, but he was extremely uncomfortable with the idea of sacredness. After a while, I had him define what was sacred to him and we had a discussion. This was what Isaac wrote on his insights based on our conversation:

There are sacred places in the world. A sacred place for me is my room, because I like to sleep. Another sacred place for me is my computer because I like to watch stuff and play on it. One last sacred place for me is my mind because I like to daydream. I have a few sacred places in the world.

As an exit piece Isaac was asked to write about his experiences with interpreting the poems with regards to learning about the sacred spiral and discovering the sacredness within himself. Isaac wrote the following:

The poem was confusing at first, but nearing the end I realized that he thinks man would give up diamonds to feel and being this man's place. My response to today's class was that it was very spiritual. I will carry this knowledge with me for a long time.

Although the lesson had a deep impact on Isaac, he had difficulty in making connections between the literature and his own personal definition of sacredness. He seemed to teeter from being extremely engaged to being fearful that I was trying to change his core spiritual belief system. I countered his fears by telling him that I want him to investigate his own ideas of sacredness and that we were not discussing religion or dogma.

Kristina

Kristina was very engaged in discussing and considering the sacred in the everyday spaces of her world. Kristina easily identified the miracles in the ordinary places and things that she lived amongst in her daily life:

I think the tree in my backyard is sacred. It is sacred because it is old and huge. It is powerful and influential because it stands with certainty and grace and through bad weather it hasn't faltered. It is truly sacred.

Of all the student participants attending, Kristina would have benefitted from an additional class during which time we could have extended much of the theme and philosophies discussed. It was my wish to study some more poetry and literature during

this theme, but I found the subject matter made most students uncomfortable, so I moved to another theme for the next week's class.

The dynamics of this class were wonderful. All three students interacted and helped support one another through collaboratively learning together. Kristina offered support to Wesley and Isaac by bolstering their self-esteem. She also added sarcastic humour when their confidence seemed low. This lightened the mood and the work was enjoyed rather than taken too seriously. Kristina also needed the same type of humour and did not seem to like to admit if she was being challenged. For example, she would come up with many ideas during most brainstorming exercises but once she had difficulty and rather than discussing her block of ideas, I blamed the colour of the marker and offered another one that had better ideas. She looked confused and then found it hilarious once she realized it was playful teasing. Her ideas then came more smoothly with the seriousness of the exercise eliminated.

Isaac often was too silly and the group eventually peer-pressured him to behave so that the others could be more engaged. Isaac responded better to his peers than he did to the teacher's advice or guidance. Isaac had a strong need to belong and his behaviour was indicative of attention seeking, although some of his distracting behaviour may have been a way to resist learning or participating in a learning activity he found too challenging.

Wesley was the quietest student in the group. In a classroom, I would imagine that he tries to become invisible to the teacher and his peers during any in class participation. He was unable to do that in our group because it was such a small group that all students were noticed and expected to participate. With practice and being in an informal setting,

Wesley began to come out of his shell and speak up more. Kristina and Isaac encouraged Wesley, and he seemed to need a smaller group environment to do well in a learning environment.

Conclusion and Implications

My own pedagogy involves care and honest interactions with students. I truly believe it's important to teach in a way that the student can access the learning. Nell Noddings's (2013) caring theory is an integral part of making this project successful. All students felt cared for and each one was nurtured and respected as an individual. Developing a relationship was paramount and often the catalyst which by student participants would become engaged. By asking students to reflect on their own life experiences and to make connections to each of these lessons, students were allowed to activate their own funds of knowledge. They could share their experiences and build on the knowledge they gained in class to that which they already know.

Relationship building in a classroom environment was paramount for success. Once all students felt accepted and had accepted one another, then the fear of failure did not become an issue. For this to happen though, the teacher must model and develop a classroom culture that will foster this type of experience:

Teaching in the community ... requires a level of sensitivity and understanding about the lives of children who are in attendance at the school. More than that, it requires a conscious awareness and capacity for caring about the social worlds that the children inhabit and move through as they perform their tasks at school. (Mogadime, 2012, p. 203)

All students have different experiences that they will bring to the class. When I am showing sensitivity to their differences and modelling how to listen and respond to those differences, students learn how to listen and respond to each other. This makes the learning environment richer for all participants because their engagement in the activities becomes fully involved.

Arts-Based Literacy Classes

Students enjoy learning when they are interested in the subject matter. Labyrinths are something that most people have seen but have not learned about in any depth. The fact that there are so many ways in which to investigate the labyrinth engaged the student participants immensely. The students did not mind learning literacy skills to be able to express themselves better since they began to feel interest and passion for that which they were learning. The literacy skills were not the main part of the lesson; rather I would include briefly small literacy lessons around the lessons that intrigued them. For example, we discussed freely our ideas about a topic. In discussion, students were excited to give their opinion and often one student would inspire new thoughts in other students. Then I would talk to them about free-writing as a way to unblock the mind and come up with new ideas about a subject and ask them to apply the same strategies while in discussion to their writing. After about 10 minutes of the free-writing exercise, we shared interesting observations about ourselves as we wrote.

I found that the class was most successful when I planned the class to have an art history lesson or theory of some kind, then a writing exercise and or group discussion, then an art project, and finally conclude the class with a written exit piece. This was successful because first of all, students were using different learning modalities and

switching their learning skills and strategies continually. It also eliminated boredom and overuse of a particular way of learning. I also noticed that having the classes structured to change in a predictable way let students know how long they had for a particular activity. So, they did not have to dread a full 2 hours of lecture, or writing, or art-making. It kept their interest peaked, and the changes also allowed for them to have transitional periods where they could talk and visit with one another. The social aspect of learning became very important as they began to know each other well. So the balance of activities was important and kept student participants excited and ready to learn.

I tried to plan the classes to be very similar in structure each time so as to create safety and predictability of activities for my students. They responded well to the structure of the lessons. The student participants would mention that they looked forward to the cookies and refreshments after their writing responses to the lesson even though they were never told the format of my lesson planning. They would also mention how they were excited to know the next art project just before I was about to deliver the lesson. The predictability allowed the students to know that the activities they enjoyed were predictably going to happen and that the activities that they may feel more challenged with would not last for the entire session. This helped the student participants to be engaged for the entire class.

Throughout all of my teaching with the student participants, I implemented the three demands of maternal pedagogy: “the preservation of life, growth both educational and personal, and training and social acceptance” (Ruddick, 2007, p. 98). By following the three demands, I was involved with the students in a deeper way than that of teacher/student. They knew I cared about them and their development. The term, *in loco*

parentis, was a serious aspect of teaching; it essentially means that while the student is in the care of the teacher, the teacher is “in the place of a parent” (“In Loco Parentis,” n.d., para. 1). They knew I was there to guide and protect them. Protecting meant sharing information about their lifestyle choices that were mentioned when they were talking amongst themselves. These were the lessons between the formal lessons taught. They knew I cared for their health by insisting they wear protective gear when working with hazardous materials such as when they made concrete trail markers. They were amused but also I could see that it meant a lot to them that I insisted they use the safety equipment. By following the three demands of maternal pedagogy (Ruddick, 2007), I also accessed other theories such as caring theory (Noddings, 2013), the preventative measures fostered in the school-to-prison pipeline theories (Ayers, 2013), funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992, 2005), and schoolhome (Roland Martin, 1992) approach.

Developing a liminal learning space was very important to me during the Literacy Labyrinth project. A liminal space meant that it was hard to describe definitely; the definition of the space becomes a bit of a home environment yet still has the essence of a structured learning environment. Every class, I made sure to come in early and set up the room as though it has been that way all week. Students would show up and the class would predictably be set up with elements to remind the students of both a classroom and a home environment. The food and refreshments would be in the same area every class. All their notebooks would be arranged in the same area. The room would be informally arranged to help create a sense of relaxation and peace. When students arrived I would have my shoes off and be in stocking feet and I encouraged students to take off their shoes and coat. These are exactly things that student participants would do if they were at

home. Because it was a temporary space, I was unable to have plants or other nurturing elements to help develop the sense of “home” for the classroom space. By consciously blurring the lines between home spaces and learning space, students behaved in a different way. When I instilled a nurturing home environment to the learning space, students responded in a way that is quite different from a structured and formalized learning space. The formality of institutional learning begins to disappear, the students’ true selves emerge, and students learn in a safe and unthreatening environment.

Another important element that I tried to incorporate was to balance the learning from an indoor space with that of an outdoor space. Although I maintained the structure of the lesson plans in a predictable way, I would change the setting of the lessons. Students would learn in an indoor setting and for the most part when they were indoors, their behaviour was fairly subdued. Often they would behave more studious even though the space was less formal. When I planned a day for students to learn outside, their behaviour was zealous, excited, and playful. Sometimes it was a challenge to get them to the learning area because they were so giddy. Natural spaces are usually not the predictable learning spaces for students. They connected certain memories, experiences, and activities to being outdoors in an educational setting. For the most part these associations were not connected with any type of formal learning. I found for the most part that as soon as students were outdoors, they were almost instantly happier and they were extremely interested in whatever activity were about to endeavour. The outdoor environment affected students in a positive way and for the most part they would not respond similarly in an indoor setting.

Larger Implications

The student participants whom I was teaching all had great potential to learn to enjoy literacy. One of the best ways for students to learn the challenging stuff is to make sure they stay *in* the classroom. When the students are sent out of the classroom, they are excluded from an education. This is one of the main arguments of the school-to-prison pipeline theorists (e.g., Ayers, 2013). When the classes first started there was some behaviour from Isaac that indicated to me that he would do certain behaviours to distract the class. A formal classroom teacher would normally send the student out so as not to distract the rest of the class. I made the classroom inclusive and such troublesome behaviour eventually was self-policed amongst students attending. Inclusion for an at-risk student means that there would be “a focus on increasing student engagement and relationship-building among teachers, students, and families, and utilizing problem solving and prevention work to improve the school climate and community” (Mallett, 2016, p. 4). In my experience, I found that as the classes continued, the distracting behaviour ceased since it held no value in creating predictable responses from me as the teacher.

Students who resist formal educational settings and curriculum may become engaged if offered alternative settings and curriculum. The after-school program once a week offered off the school property and with students knowing that they have the full power to decide whether or not they will participate changed the dynamics of the power structure for the students in some way. They chose to attend. They chose to learn. They chose to participate. Every class I reminded them that although most times students are told they need teachers, they should remember that if a teacher has no students, there is

no one to teach. I would express gratitude to them every day at the conclusion of the class and there was a sense of respect and honour to them by being present and participating. Students often feel powerless and coerced to learn. “Once they can place themselves within the matrix of domination based on their own social locations, they begin to understand how their actions in their own lives can affect society, and they are empowered to become agents of change” (Ferber, O’Reilly Herrera, & Samuels, 2007, p. 523). Changing the perspective of space and curriculum and helping students to see their own power in deciding to learn engages some resistant students to be motivated learners.

I discovered that student participants were willing to try literacy skills when they did not feel the lesson was exclusively based on their learning literacy. The literacy skills were a tool that helped the students to express and discuss their opinions and journaling in different ways. Alternative learning especially with regards to literacy is more successful if the students believe they are learning something else. By incorporating visual arts, history, music, science, sports, or other subjects as the main learning and infusing literacy skills as part of the curriculum, students would be more engaged and see the practical value of learning these skills.

Students need to know that they matter. When students were attending my class they knew I cared about them and wanted to see them succeed. We often reviewed basic literacy strategies which appeared to me that they either never learned or never implemented in formal writing while attending school. I showed them that I cared by noticing where they needed improvements and showing them the difference once they adopted new strategies. All students felt safe and knew that they would not be judged or thought less of if they experienced failure during the class. They mattered enough to

make sure they had some food and fresh water to drink every class. When I suspended the classes of the pilot project on June 25, 2015, I told the students that we would have to wait until we had authorization from the Helping Hands centre before meeting again to begin construction of the labyrinth. The students did not want the classes to end. They wanted to continue learning so much that every Thursday night, which was our class time, they loitered in the parking lot of the Helping Hands centre hoping that I would show up. Eventually a few students contacted me and told me that this is what they were doing and requested that I come teach them. I told them that we had to wait until the Helping Hands centre offered us permission and we received formal approval from the Brock University REB to continue with the construction of the labyrinth. I found it amazing that a group of students who normally are resistant to learning literacy would come on their own time and wait for a teacher who was not scheduled to come teach. I truly believe that these students knew that I cared about them deeply and believed they were capable of much more than what they were doing presently in school. It was also my opinion that they were very interested in the project and felt some ownership as being participants in a project that may positively affect their community.

To create an environment where students may learn a subject and simultaneously be achieving literacy skills would be of great benefit for many resistant learners. For this to be successful, there may be a need for teachers to work together in a multi-curricular setting. An environment such as that would offer a different teaching environment since students would be learning multiple skills and achieving many objectives rather than one specific subject objective. Students who resist formal curriculum and learning

environments may do well when offered an alternative way to see the interdependency of subject matter and skills.

What Did They Teach Me?

My students had insights about their community and were aware of the problems that exist and had solutions to making Draw Port a better place. I learned from my students because they were not adults, they felt as though their voices were not heard, and adults, for the most part, did not trust that they could make decisions that were sound or wise.

While investigating labyrinth themes, the students often had very deep insights and wisdom beyond their years. Their insights added so much to the lessons I had planned since I would occasionally change my plans to facilitate something that students mentioned as part of their interpretation of a lesson. For example, I had an informal conversation with Wesley after one class when I noticed that he did not participate in the independent writing exercises. I asked him about his goals with his studies. He said that originally his dream was to become a dentist, but because his grades are so low, that he was going to give up on that career option. I asked him why would he give up, and he responded that he was not cut out for school. Then I asked him how he does in school with writing. He replied that he is not very good and doesn't do many of his assignments. At a grade 10 level, he should be able to write essays, so I gently asked him, "what is a paragraph?" He responded that it is a bunch of words. So, then I reworded the questions and asked "what is the structure of a paragraph," or more precisely, "what are the three parts to a paragraph?" He was unable to answer that question and looked quite ashamed for not knowing. This showed me that he does not have the fundamentals in writing and so of course he was defeated when required to write an essay or write about anything for

that matter. My plan for the next lesson was to help this student achieve some improvements in his literacy abilities (Appendix C). I also realized that if Wesley didn't have that fundamental knowledge, most likely the rest of the group would also benefit from the review.

Another example of my adapting the class to the students' insights was during the trail marker class. Some of the students noticed how precise the labyrinths were and that there seemed to be a pattern that was similar from one design to the next. One of the student participants, who did not become part of the research sample group, mentioned that she really would not like to figure out the math to do that! After the class was finished, I went home and looked for a way to involve math as part of the next class. So, I taught the group sacred geometry and the importance of the sacred spiral in labyrinths. This was one of the best classes and it also came closest to connecting literacy and art to multi-curricular learning.

Happily, I learned that my students were capable of learning literacy, and enjoy learning literacy in an environment that was more suited to their safety and comfort levels. I discovered much of their reluctance to literacy was that they often needed to learn or review basic fundamentals in literacy to be successful. Many times the reluctance to learn was based more on the reluctance to show failure or acknowledge not knowing certain strategies or skills. I learned that students will be willing to take risks if they know they will not be judged. I found that many students identified their reluctance to learning as an important part of their personality and that it was integral to maintain that aspect of their character. For students to change that view, they needed to practice the literacy

skills and discover how they were empowered as learners. I learned from my students that there is a possibility for students to learn to love literacy lessons.

What Did I Teach Them?

When I began my research, my main goal was to engage resistant students in learning literacy in an arts-based literacy project. Formally, students learned art history, themes of investigation in art in a philosophical sense, and practical visual arts techniques. The formal aspects were conducted in a way that allowed students to investigate the objective of the class through discussions and journal writing. As they learned subject matter, I also taught them practical ways to discuss and write about it.

When we first began classes, no one wanted to participate in group discussions. This was a habit they formed throughout their school lives and insisted on continuing in my class. To encourage a class discussion, students focused on a word-web and we developed a collaborative visual image of thoughts and opinions. By focusing on the paper on the board rather than looking at each other, students slowly opened up and shared ideas. To make the class successful, it was important to me that all students realize that their peers felt similar angst when participating and risk-taking. They were not alone with those feelings. Collectively as a group, I wanted to instill a sense of care and support for each other:

Caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference and into the other's. When we care, we consider the other's point of view, his objective needs and what he expects of us. Our attention, our mental engrossment is on the cared-for, not on ourselves. Our reasons for acting, then, have to do with the

other's wants and desires and with the objective elements of his problematic situation. (Noddings, 1984, p. 24)

As they realized they would not be judged for their thoughts of being right or wrong, great or awful, they became more interested in honestly expressing themselves.

Eventually, I moved the word-web from the wall to a communal table where students could still focus on the large sheet of paper and write their ideas down while discussing their viewpoints. Student participants developed a kinship with one another as they realized that they all felt at some point inadequately capable of brainstorming or sharing ideas. Instead of refusing to try, they then began to encourage each other.

Once students learned to brainstorm and support one another, the next step was to get them to brainstorm alone and stimulate their thoughts independently. To do this, I started with a word-web, and then had students write formal paragraphs. All students could not define or describe a formal paragraph, so I taught them the framework and then they were able to write in a formal way. After several classes of this method, I then introduced free-writing and this set them off on a tangent. They thought it was a ridiculous exercise and questioned my teaching professionalism for having introduced such an exercise. I persevered and challenged them to try it and find out what the results would be by doing this exercise. Most students came up with even better ideas free writing than with the word-web and some preferred free-writing as they had freedom to investigate an idea with no restrictions.

I also taught students to journal and express their thoughts and opinions by mixing text and images. This was a new experience for them as well and for the most part they struggled with risk-taking in regards to this exercise. For some reason, they were

worried that their drawings would be judged so they included very simplistic stick men and did not really deviate far from simplistic primary drawings. If I were to teach this method again, I would start with a formal lecture in an art historical sense teaching students how the voyageurs kept diaries and drew images and wrote ideas alongside. Often when they have seen visual examples and discuss the reasoning why images and text both offer different ways to communicate, students become engaged and participate more willingly with a new exercise. With concrete examples of people who were not considered master artists practicing this exercise, the students would have connected with them as ordinary people just as themselves.

The Literacy Labyrinth project commenced as a pilot project at the Helping Hands community support centre. It was conducted early in 2015 and the 2-hour classes were held once a week from May 7 to June 25, 2015. Most of the integral study of labyrinths and concepts relating to it occurred during this time. Originally, this would have been my main research project, but there were issues with conflict due to power and inability to allow students to lead the project as was originally agreed upon. Eventually, Helping Hands denied access to its property to continue with the physical building of the labyrinth since there were too many people involved and the “hands” of the students were not welcome in the final project. The expectation of Helping Hands was that the labyrinth structure was to be completed as good as or better than what a landscaper would do. The community group did not have confidence that the students would be able to do so even with landscapers involved in the project.

In the process before Helping Hands decided to call off the proposed building of the labyrinth, we invited one of the administrators to come to a class so we could discuss

the issues. The students were very committed to this project and excited to begin building. I prepared the student participants during a few classes prior to the meeting and focused on social activism and taught them how to participate and communicate respectfully during a formal meeting.

The students were very surprised how smoothly the meeting went; however, by the end of the meeting the Helping Hands administrator had convinced them that their organization of the space and design selection of a labyrinth was not esthetically pleasing. I brought drawings of labyrinths that were compromises to the suggestions that the Helping Hands administrator expected as a design, and she did not like the square aspects of the labyrinth. The students wanted a Roman design, which is square rather than round. I did not interfere much in the meeting except to keep the meeting on topic and watch the time so we covered all points in the meeting agenda we were all following. The students did most of the talking when the Helping Hands administrator was not talking. Overall, it was a success, not because of the outcome of decisions made but more so that all students participated and expressed their opinions clearly and concisely. Surprisingly, none of the students were absent for the meeting, which was what I anticipated would happen.

The experiences of this meeting were positive and empowering for the students. This was Kristina's documentation of experiencing the meeting:

The biggest impact of this meeting would have to be showing us how to compromise and collaborate as a team. We learned that compromising is a big part of our life. It is a great way to show us how to collaborate and compromise in real life. It is good skills for our everyday life. That is a big impact.

Although I could see how the Helping Hands administrator influenced the student participants to be swayed to her choices in design and use of space. The students' experience was very important and successful. They took a huge risk and were surprised that they were able to participate in the activity so well. This exercise also helped to build student participants' confidence and gave them a sense of empowerment. Most of all, they learned good communication skills and how to conduct themselves during a meeting. One important criterion for me was that the Helping Hands administrator was treated as a valued guest in our class and that any expression of disagreement would be communicated in a respectful manner. By choosing to be present for the meeting, it also showed me that the student participants felt safe to have this new experience even though it seemed scary to them.

Successes and Challenges

This project had many successes, but it still must be viewed through a critical lens. The successes and challenges often appeared as unexpected surprises. Since this was the first time I had ever attempted to develop a research project that included multiple administrative expectations both from Brock University and Helping Hands community support centre, there was much that I had learned through this process.

Successes With the Project

Throughout the classes, students were extremely engaged and seemed to enjoy every class they attended. The subject matter was very interesting to the students and kept them engaged as I taught them interesting lessons; they also learned how to process that information more effectively with literacy skills. All of the students acquired some new skills that they learned from this project. The successes in literacy were teaching

organization to the students through brainstorming and learning about the formal structures of paragraphs. The students also were open to new ways to read and write, such as when I taught students active reading skills. Some active reading skills they experimented with included highlighting important information and making jot notes in the margins of articles. Other students had difficulties with tracking and used tools such as a ruler to stay on track. It appeared that some students, even though they would not admit it, would most likely use that strategy as well since they were very impressed with how well Isaac could read after he tried the ruler as a tracking method. Some needed more literacy skills than others, but I adjusted my teaching for the needs of each student depending on what was required.

A huge success I found was that the students were very engaged and involved. The whole idea of being part of a project that I would be writing my research about was very intriguing to my student participants. They felt like honoured members of something that was bigger than themselves. They also were very interested in making a difference in their community and by constructing a labyrinth they would become a part of a positive influence to change Draw Port for the better. The whole idea of these students truly being engaged in every class was new to them. They were usually resistant to learning literacy and resisted participating in many writing or reading exercises in school. For me, it was a huge success to have them come and take risks, participate, and learn new skills. Some even admitted to me that they were using these new strategies in school and it bolstered their confidence!

The artwork was varied and I involved students in making art that varied from individual to collaborative art-making. This was also a way to prepare the students for the

culminating project when we were to build the labyrinth collectively with community members or professional landscapers. The art work was varied in the techniques, medium, and application; they worked in both two- and three-dimensional works of art and experienced clean, sterile art environments to messy and somewhat unpredictable art-making. It was important for the students to be aware of the theoretical learning with the practical hands-on learning while building the labyrinth. The students enjoyed and adapted nicely to any lesson I taught them.

Although the course was an arts-based literacy class, I had an underlying goal to influence students to actively become involved with their community. I hoped that they would see by the end of the project that they have power in affecting the future of their community. I also had them think about and discuss social norms of Draw Port and critically think about whether these norms are valid. For instance, we discussed the social norm of their peers thinking that it was not necessary to do well in school, that there is no hope to find work, or that postsecondary education is not worthwhile. The students did not believe that this was acceptable, but felt that there needed to be incentives to help students to believe they could have a future.

During the pilot project, we were planning to build the labyrinth and after 8 weeks, I discovered that the project had been rejected by the Helping Hands community support centre. My student participants were very upset and disappointed that the project fell through. On June 25, 2015, I decided to suspend the classes until we had received formal authorization from the Brock REB and from the Helping Hands centre to move forward with constructing the labyrinth. My student participants did not want the classes to end. For instance, Isaac, who often grumbled about coming, had grown interested in the themes and

subjects introduced around labyrinths. He also loved the food and camaraderie that was growing amongst the students. After that date, I received a message from one of the students a few weeks later asking if I was coming back since they still are waiting for me every Thursday even though I had cancelled the classes. I was shocked! These students resist literacy at school and avoid class whenever possible. This was a voluntary activity after school, and since it was July, they were officially on summer holidays and still coming on Thursdays waiting to receive instruction. I contacted all students and told them not to loiter at Helping Hands if there were no classes scheduled. I did not want them to get into trouble with the staff there. A couple of weeks after that, I received another message from one of the students and they had resorted to waiting for me on Thursdays again and wanted to know if I could come teach them. This time, I contacted all the parents to tell them that I was still waiting for approval and that the classes were on hold until I receive authorization from the university and from Helping Hands.

It was apparent that these students really enjoyed learning literacy skills from me. I made a connection with them and they wanted to be committed to the project. I observed that they all have the ability to be good students, only they needed someone to connect with them in a way that they were engaged and feeling worthy in a learning environment. Some of the lessons that they learned or perhaps were nurtured in their character included commitment, loyalty, and care for one another. They could not wait to resume classes and see the project to completion.

Challenges With the Project

Although I could describe many wonderful successes with my project, there were some aspects of the project that did not go as well as I had hoped. The unsuccessful parts

of the project were based on upholding and following policies, working with community, and my own project planning. With more experience, many of these struggles would not have been an issue. This project was a way for me to gain experience and learn lessons in planning a multi-organizational community project that was derived from an arts-based literacy project.

The greatest struggle for me was dealing with the administrators at Helping Hands. I had initiated large community initiatives in the past and usually only dealt with one person who relayed information back and forth to chief administrators. In this instance, five administrators all wanted to be involved in this project. The project was supposed to be a youth-based initiative, and most decision-making would be made by the student participants. Of course major issues such as safety and the organization of professionals working on the grounds during construction was the responsibility of myself and Helping Hands. Helping Hands started to become involved in the design of the labyrinth and opposed the design the students had chosen. After that, Helping Hands opposed the students being involved in building the labyrinth and said that they wanted it done by professional landscapers. Eventually, I had a meeting with them and brought Dr. Rowsell along for support. They said they had changed their minds and gave some comments about the land needing more preparation than what they were willing to offer. The only issue was that I had raised all the funds and donated the money (\$1,500) to them so any additional work to the land would not have been out of their pocket. So, the administrator did not discuss that issue extensively but went on to say that they decided after agreeing to allow the labyrinth on their property, that it was actually not in their long-term plans to care for a labyrinth. Then Helping Hands offered a small space about

10 feet square behind the parking lot in the back of the property for the student participants to do an alternative project and the administrator told me to contact his assistant to carry through with it. When I tried to contact the assistant, there was always no response to phone calls or emails. Although I had full support from Dr. Rowsell, I really believe that I should have had more support from the university from a higher level about this problem. Consequently, I abandoned hope with Helping Hands and moved on from them as it then became my pilot project.

If I committed to a project such as this again and raise funds on my own, I would prepare a contractual agreement with the community group with whom I would work. I would also have in writing the process and plan of the project agreed by all members involved, so that my research and plan would not be skewed later on as the project progressed. There should be accountability if a donation is made and not used for the project. I had applied to a major national hardware company for a \$1,200 grant and my employer donated an additional \$300 to this project. I am not sure what Helping Hands did with the money or if there was accountability for donations to be used for what they are intended for. As far as ethics are concerned, this may have been an ethics issue if I would have been approved through the university's REB on time.

One of my major goals was for students to learn literacy skills through the arts and then apply their skills by interacting with community. The community-lead initiative was supposed to be the labyrinth construction segment of my research project. Students would find the value of learning literacy skills once they have been working alongside members of the community. Most of the students who participated in this project had never contemplated postsecondary education. It was my wish for students to work

alongside people of many different vocations so that they could see them as ordinary people but perhaps be inspired by them and consider career options. Some of the adults who would have been involved would have had diverse professional backgrounds such as office clerks, landscapers, teachers, and architects. In any case, I did not plan or implement ways in which students could learn how literacy effectively helps the student participants in attaining career goals after Helping Hands fell through.

I also had some challenges as far as my goals in teaching the students and being involved with the community simultaneously. The plan I had was that students would be involved with the community in a leadership role during the construction of the labyrinth. This did not take place and I did not plan an alternative way for the student participants to interact with the community during the project. There was a lot at stake with regards to the concluding labyrinth construction with regards to working and interacting with the community. So, in effect, the resulting project being unauthorized by Helping Hands, I did not succeed in implementing this particular segment of my project very well.

Collection of data could have been much better. I was surprised in discovering how often the student participants did not partake in the writing exercises! If I were to attempt this project again, I would use audio recordings of the verbal discussions and perhaps have students interview each other since I discovered they spoke and revealed themselves differently with peers than with me as their educator. That way, I would have more data and of course recorded information through the lenses of each participant from the perspective of the peer. Overall, I was happy with the data and artifacts I had collected, but there was room for improvement.

Lastly, my goal to instill inspiration in my student participants to be a catalyst for change did not happen. Although they were inspired, because the plan did not follow-through with the construction of the labyrinth, any influence I may have had on these students with regards to social change may not be long lasting. There must be action to create change. The students were inspired while we discussed and planned, but I doubt that they will take an initiative to make change on their own since there were too many obstacles with Helping Hands. The students' responses indicated that the lesson from Helping Hands was that they were as powerless as they expressed themselves to be at the beginning of the pilot project.

Main Research Question: What Are the Experiences of Marginalized Youth in an Arts-Based Literacy Project?

The marginalized youth who came to participate in my research project had a great experience. They learned how to participate in a group setting, and took risks by sharing ideas and opinions. As discussed earlier, students developed literacy skills, learned about art and art history through studying labyrinths, and practiced critical thinking skills. The experiences appeared to be quite empowering: "I think this has really been a great experience. I really liked when we did word-webs and had discussions on meaningful things like activism" (Kristina). All students claimed that a course created for students based on the way they learned in the project would be beneficial to offer in school. For example Wesley wrote:

I think this should be a class in the school environment. The English classes don't really use word-webs very often and that could be incorporated into school work.

Labyrinths could also be incorporated into art classes. I feel like some of the students will enjoy it.

There was a closeness and care between the participants as we approached the end of the project. Their camaraderie, care, and concern for each other were influenced on the way the classroom culture was designed from the beginning. The experiences of the students in the classroom was often influenced and based on the way I as the teacher structured the classroom culture.

Research Sub-Question 1: How Does Community Play a Role in This Project?

In the initial pilot project, the community, being Helping Hands, did not support the student participants' initiatives to be a leading force of positive change within the community. As was discussed earlier, students were very committed to this project and looked forward to building a permanent structure. We reconvened and began the research project because it was finally approved by the Brock University REB. I applied for approval to the Brock REB on January 11, 2015, and was finally approved by the REB on December 2, 2015 (REB certificate number 14-179-ROWSELL). My opinion is that the approval process was too lengthy and because the initial project fell through and became a pilot project, we did not work together with the community. There was not enough time, no funds for building materials since Helping Hands had all the donation money, and no available space for building the labyrinth, so consequently we did not have any interactions with the community. Surprisingly, at the end of the project, although disappointed that there had been no construction that happened during the actual research project, the student participants were open to contribute their time and efforts if the possibility arose again:

I don't think it would be a bad idea for there to be a labyrinth in my neighbourhood. I feel like a good amount of people would use it. Yes, I think an outdoor labyrinth would benefit our community because I feel like a lot of people in Draw Port would use it. (Wesley)

I would love to have a labyrinth built in my neighbourhood. I feel that the community would benefit greatly from having a labyrinth so that people can walk it and take the labyrinth in their own way. I feel it would be a learning experience for all those who walk the path. (Isaac)

I would most definitely want [a labyrinth] in my community. I would because people have a lot of negativity and not a lot of ways to get rid of it. I think the labyrinth would be a great way to calm down and help the people. (Kristina)

From learning about the labyrinth and applying skills they developed by learning strategies in literacy, the student participants were able to express themselves well. Even though they were disappointed by the community, I was impressed that they had a positive attitude and still believed that the construction of a labyrinth would be a benefit to their community. In the end, my student participants showed care and concern to help their community. A great by-product of implementing caring theory in pedagogical practices (Noddings, 2013) is to make oneself a benefit for others and lift those who need the help.

Research Sub-Question 2: In What Ways Does My Reflexivity as a Visual Arts Teacher and My Work With Marginalized Youth Play a Role in the Research?

My experience from teaching on the reserve has helped develop me into the teacher I am today. Many of my strategies were the result of working hard at striving for success with students in that northern community. My reflexivity of that time taught me to be flexible and creative in the way I approached teaching. Students need to have a balance of fun and work as they move through the process of learning. I also found that caring deeply for my students made them feel a sense of worth. I was more concerned about how the students felt about themselves in the moment than if the curriculum expectations were met for the day. Reflecting on the challenges I had at that time helped me to become patient and develop empathy for my students. I developed curriculum that they would be able to access and feel that what they were doing was meaningful in their lives.

The lessons I learned on the reserve worked equally as well with the marginalized students I encountered during the time I developed an arts-based literacy workshop for graffiti vandals. Many of the strategies I used with students on the reserve worked equally as well with students in Port Draw. Finding unconventional and alternative settings to teach students as well as finding the subject matter that most interested them and then applying formal lessons in literacy between all the interesting contextual lessons kept the students engaged. Keeping students' interest balanced between formal structure and hands-on creative art making seemed to allow students to choose to want to participate and continue attending throughout the duration of the project.

My reflexivity also taught me that rather than being dominating and authoritarian, I would offer myself in a caring and nurturing way so as to engage my students. I would show gratitude for allowing me to teach them and for them to be open to receive what I was willing to share. I also thanked them for sharing with me and helping me to learn to

become a better teacher. I would usually do this at the end of every class and let them know how much I would appreciate if they took the time to come to attend another class on the next session. I promised them I would do my best to plan and deliver a lesson that would be meaningful to them. It was important to me that they feel like honoured and respected members of the classroom and that their presence was valued immensely. At the end of the project one of the students mentioned to me that he noticed that I thanked them at the end of every class for attending. They thought it was odd that a teacher would thank the student. It seems that it is a very different experience to marginalized students when they have a teacher express gratitude to them for being open to learn. Caring and nurturing teaching methods offer engagement to literacy and learning of resistant learners with the use of alternative learning spaces and curriculum.

References

- Alaca, Z., Anglin, C., & Thomas, K. J. (2015). *Reconciliation and equity movements for First Nations children and families: An evaluation of Shannen's Dream, Jordan's Principle, and I am a Witness*. Retrieved from https://fncaringociety.com/sites/default/files/Reconciliation%20and%20equity%20movements%20-%20Evaluation%202015_0.pdf
- The A/r/tographic trail. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://theartographictrail.com/>
- Ayers, W. (1997). I walk with delinquents. *Educational Leadership*, 55(2), 48-51.
- Ayers, W. (2013, April 17). *Interview with Bill Ayers on urban educational reform and the school to prison pipeline* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ssd9VhtnFvM>
- Bagnoli, A. (2004). Researching identities with multi-method autobiographies. Retrieved from <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/9/2/bagnoli.html>
- Ballard, S. (2015). Action research: A personal epiphany and journey with evidence-based practice. *Knowledge Quest: Evidence-Based Practice*, 43(3), 44-45.
- Barnard, A., McCosker, H., & Gerber, R. (1999). Phenomenography: A qualitative research approach for exploring understanding in health care. *Qualitative Health Research*, 9(2), 212-226. doi:10.1177/104973299129121794
- Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (1998). *Local literacies: Reading and writing in one community*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Brydon-Miller, M., & Maguire, P. (2009). Participatory action research: Contributions to the development of practitioner inquiry in education. *Educational Action Research*, 17(1), 79-93. doi:10.1080/09650790802667469

- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London, UK: Sage.
- Christle, C. A., Jolivet, K., & Nelson, C. M. (2005). Breaking the school to prison pipeline: Identifying school risk and protective factors for youth delinquency. *Exceptionality*, 13(2), 69-88. doi:10.1207/s15327035ex1302_2
- Cohen, D., & Crabtree, B. (2006, July). *Qualitative research guidelines project*. Retrieved from <http://www.qualres.org/HomeGrou-3589.html>
- Connell, R. W. (1994). Poverty and education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 64(2), 125-149. doi:10.17763/haer.64.2.m14947g30k1x5781
- Coussée, F., Roets, G., & De Bie, M. (2009). Empowering the powerful: Challenging hidden processes of marginalization in youth work policy and practice in Belgium. *Critical Social Policy*, 29(3), 421-442. doi:10.1177/0261018309105178
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2015). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Cumming, T. M., Strnadová, I., & Dowse, L. (2014). At-risk youth in Australian schools and promising models of intervention. *International Journal of Special Education*, 29(3), 16-25.
- Cummins, J. (1997). Minority status and schooling in Canada. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 28(3), 411-430. doi:10.1525/aeq.1997.28.3.411
- du Preez, J. (2008). Locating the researcher in the research: Personal narrative and reflective practice. *Reflective Practice*, 9(4), 509-519.

- Egerton, J. D., & Roberts, L. W. (2014). Cultural capital or habitus? Bourdieu and beyond in the explanation of enduring educational inequality. *Theory and Research in Education*, 12(2), 193-220. doi:10.1177/1477878514530231
- Eisner, E. (2001). Should we create new aims for art education? *Art Education*, 54(5), 6-10. doi:10.1080/00043125.2001.11653461
- Ferber, A. L., O'Reilly Herrera, A., & Samuels, D. R. (2007). The matrix of oppression and privilege: Theory and practice for the new millennium. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51(4), 516-531. doi:10.1177/0002764207307740
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York : Seabury Press, 1970.
- Gaventa, J. (1980). *Power and powerlessness: Quiescence and rebellion in an Appalachian valley*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Gutek, G. (2005). *Historical and philosophical foundations of education: A biographical introduction*. Columbus, OH: Pearson.
- Haynes, K. (2006). Linking narrative and identity construction: using autobiography in accounting research. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 17(4), 399-418.
- Held, V. (2005). *The ethics of care: Personal, political, and global*. Oxford University Press.
- hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Honsinger, B. (2011). *Creating a global consciousness through the driver model of curriculum development* (Master's thesis). Brock University, St. Catharines, ON. Retrieved from <https://dr.library.brocku.ca/handle/10464/3172>

- In loco parentis. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/in%20loco%20parentis>
- Janks, H. (2010). *Literacy and power*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kinghorn, A., Solomon, P., & Chan, H. M. (2007). Temporal and spatial trends of mercury in fish collected in the English-Wabigoon river system in Ontario, Canada. *The Science of the Total Environment*, 372(2/3), 615-623.
- Kinloch, V. (2007). Youth representations of community, art, and struggle in Harlem. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 116, 37-49. doi:10.1002/ace
- Klem, A., & Connell, J. (2004). Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health*, 74(7), 262-273. doi:10.1111/j.1746-1561.2004.tb08283.x
- Knowles, J. G., & Cole, A. L. (2008). *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Knowles, J. G., Promislow, S., & Cole, A. L. (Eds.). (2008). *Creating scholartistry: Imagining the arts-informed thesis or dissertation*. Halifax, NS: Backalong Books.
- Lewis, O. (1998). The culture of poverty. *Society*, 35(2), 7-9.
- Louis, K. S., Marks, H. M., & Kruse, S. (1996). Teachers' professional community in restructuring schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 33(4), 757-798. doi:10.3102/00028312033004757
- Louv, R. (2006). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.
- Macionis, J. J., & Gerber, L. M. (2005). *Sociology* (5th Canadian Ed.). Toronto, ON: Pearson Education.

- Mallett, C. A. (2016). The school-to-prison pipeline: From school punishment to rehabilitative inclusion. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 1-9. doi:10.1080/1045988X.2016.1144554
- Martin, J. R.. (1995). A Philosophy of Education for the Year 2000. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(5), 355–359. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20405340>
- McCluskey, K. W., Baker, P. A., & McCluskey, A. L. (2005). Creative problem solving with marginalized populations: Reclaiming lost prizes through in-the-trenches interventions. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 49(4), 330-341. doi:10.1177/001698620504900406
- Mills, G. E. (2000). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Mills, G. E. (2007). *Action research: a guide for the teacher researcher* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Mogadime, D. (2012). Using interdisciplinary feminist theory to arrive at an understanding of critical educators who put human rights at the center of school curriculum. *Safe Spaces*, 5, 195-207. doi:10.1007/978-94-6091-936-7_12
- Mogadime, D., Mentz, P. K., Armstrong, D. E., & Holtam, B. (2010). Constructing self as leader: Case studies of women who are change agents in South Africa. *Urban Education*, 45(6), 797-821. doi:10.1177/0042085910384203
- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into practice*, 31(2), 132-141.

- National Middle School Association. (2003). *This we believe: Successful schools for young adolescents—A position paper of the National Middle School Association*. Westerville, OH: Author.
- Natt, H. (2014). *The kids need hip-hop: Re-engaging students through culturally relevant pedagogy* (Master's thesis). Brock University, St. Catharines, ON. Retrieved from https://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/5186/Brock_Natt_Harjot_2013.pdf?sequence=1
- Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics & moral education*. Berkeley University of California Press, c1984.
- Noddings, N. (2013). *Caring: A relational approach to ethics and moral education*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Noddings, N. (2002). *Educating moral people: A caring alternative to character education*. Teachers College Press.
- Nutshell Biographies Center for Learning Through Community Service. (n.d.). *Who is Paulo Freire—and how are his ideas relevant to community service learning?* Retrieved from <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~hfox/freire.html>
- Ontario College of Teachers. (2012). Foundations of professional practice. Retrieved from https://www.oct.ca/-/media/PDF/Foundations%20of%20Professional%20Practice/Foundation_e.pdf
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014). *Achieving excellence: Renewed vision for education in Ontario*. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/excellent.html>

- O'Reilly, A. (2007). Feminist mothering. In A. O'Reilly (Ed.), *Maternal theory: Essential readings*. Toronto, ON: Demeter Press.
- Pahl, K., & Rowsell, J. (2010). *Artifactual literacies: Every object tells a story*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Robinson, F. (2011). *The ethics of care: A feminist approach to human security*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Roland Martin, J. (1992). *The schoolhome: Rethinking schools for changing families*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rothman, K. (2007). Beyond mothers and fathers: Ideology in a patriarchal society. In A. O'Reilly (Ed.), *Maternal theory: Essential readings* (pp. 390-407). Toronto, ON: Demeter Press.
- Ruddick, S. (2007). Maternal Thinking. In A. O'Reilly (Ed.), *Maternal theory: Essential readings* (pp. 96-113). Toronto, ON: Demeter Press.
- Save the Kids Group. (n.d.). *Save the kid*. Retrieved from <http://savethekidsgroup.org/?s=school+to+prison+pipeline>
- Streck, D. R. (2014). Knowledge and transformative social action: The encounter of selected traditions of participatory (action) research. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 12(4), 457-473. doi:10.1080/14767724.2014.901907
- Thoreau, H. D. (1960). *Thoreau on man & nature* (A. G. Volkman, Ed.). Mount Vernon, NY: Peter Pauper Press.

- Tilleczek, K., Furlong, A., & Ferguson, B. (2010). Marginalized youth in contemporary educational contexts: a tranquil invitation to a rebellious celebration. *Education Canada*, 50(5). Retrieved from <http://www.cea-ace.ca/education-canada/article/marginalized-youth-contemporary-educational-contexts-tranquil-invitation-re>
- Thompson, C. H. (2008, December 27). Willis anti-school subculture [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://sociologytwynham.com/2008/12/27/willis-anti-school-subculture/>
- Webb, K., & Blond, J. (1995). Teacher knowledge: The relationship between caring and knowing. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11(6), 611-625. doi:10.1016/0742-051X(95)00017-E
- Willis, P. (1979). *Learning to labor: How working class kids get working class jobs*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Willis, P. (2000). *The ethnographic imagination*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Appendix A

Trail Markers: Lesson Plan

Name: Ms. Sherilyn Lehn

Lesson 3: Trail Markers

Subject: Literacy Labyrinth Topic: Trail Markers

Time allotment: 6 pm – 8 pm

Lesson Objective:

- 1) Defining the Purpose of Trail Markers
- 2) Identifying Symbolic Relevance of Trail Markers in Life
- 3) Identifying Personal and Community Trail Markers

Prescribed Learning Outcome(s)—*taken directly from the IRP(s)*

It is expected that students will be able to:

-
-

Specific Learning Outcomes(s)—*refine/focus the PLO(s) into something that is specific, manageable & measurable*

SWBAT (Students will be able to):

-
-

Materials/Resources:

- LCD Projector
- Student journal/sketchbooks
- Cement
- Materials for path stones

Lesson Structure:

Time (minutes)	Lesson Development

10 mins.	Introduction/Hook: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin the powerpoint • Converse with the student participants about times when they were lost even though they knew the way. • What does this mean? •
10 mins.	Body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (10 Minutes) • What is the purpose? • Students will have open discussion • (10 Minutes) • Write some words or images that you would want to see as a trail marker if walking a labyrinth. • Draw some corresponding images to the words • How would trail markers be beneficial to a labyrinth? • (10 Minutes) • Begin discussing with students until there is a discussion for and against • Students are divided in 2 groups and have 1 minute to write down arguments to support the side they are on and then debate amongst each other. All student participants are encouraged to participate in this activity
10 mins.	
10 mins.	
20 mins.	
45 mins.	
15 mins.	Closure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal Writing • . • . Write a paragraph describing a turning point in your life where you had been presented a trail marker. (this could be an event or something that randomly happened that changed the course of your life) • • Write one word that sums up the whole lesson for

	today <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • Dismiss students.
--	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Extension Activities:

How can you extend/enrich the learning for fast-finishers?

•

Adaptations and/or Modifications:

*Consider alternate methods/strategies to meet to same outcomes (adaptations)?
How will you modify (change) the assignment to meet the needs of students on an IEP?*

•

Assessment/Evaluation: Student Achievement

How well has the student demonstrated understanding in relation to the learning outcome(s)? How will it measured and how will you collect the data?

•

Work Ethic (Good, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement): Effort

What are the criteria for each?

G	S	N
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • •

Appendix B

Trail Markers: PowerPoint (Resource for the Lesson)

Literacy Labyrinth

Trail Markers



Do Labyrinths need a trail marker?

- What is the purpose?
- How would trail markers be beneficial to a labyrinth?
- Write some words or images that you would want to see as a trail marker if walking a labyrinth.



Milestones and Trail Markers?

- Write a paragraph describing a turning point in your life where you had been presented a trail marker. (this could be an event or something that randomly happened that changed the course of your life)
- Activity * design your trail marker. You must use one word.



Appendix C

Paragraph Writing Resource

Teacher: Ms. Sherilyn Lehn

The 3 Parts to a Paragraph

1. Introduction

- one sentence
- introduces main idea or topic

2. Body

- 3 to 5 sentences
- supports the main idea
- expands on the topic
- provides examples and details

3. Conclusion

- one sentence in length
- sums up the main idea
- leaves reader with the most important point or idea

Appendix D

Lesson Plan: Death and Rebirth

Name: Ms. Sherilyn Lehn

Lesson 2: Literacy Labyrinth

Theme: Death and Rebirth

Subject: Literacy Labyrinth **Topic:** Introduction and consideration of the path
Time allotment: 6 pm – 8pm

Lesson Objective:

- 1) Questioning / discussion “What is the significance of Death and Rebirth as a theme in a Labyrinth?”
- 2) Concrete Poetry: Combining visual arts with text
- 3) Planning the Labyrinth

Prescribed Learning Outcome(s)—*taken directly from the IRP(s)*

It is expected that students will be able to:

-
-

Specific Learning Outcomes(s)—*refine/focus the PLO(s) into something that is specific, manageable & measurable*

SWBAT (Students will be able to):

-
-

Materials/Resources:

- Handout Literacy Labyrinth outline
- Handout Parent and student Participant consent forms
-

Lesson Structure:

Time (minutes)	Lesson Development
10 mins.	Introduction/Hook: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death and Rebirth what is it? • Discuss freely student participant's opinion of these topic points • Word Web and Group Discussion •
10 mins.	Body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (10 Minutes) Students free write their own ideas of death and rebirth • (10 Minutes) Students free write how death and rebirth would be important to them personally • • (15 Minutes) Power Point: Labyrinth themes of Death and Rebirth • Students should write about the talking points of Death and Rebirth from the questions provided: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes in attitudes 2. Changes in lifestyle choices 3. Milestones in life 4. Can represent real deaths and rebirth into new life (eg. Parent dies and child walks the labyrinth as a symbol of letting go) • Write in your journal personal Deaths and Rebirths in your life experiences • • • (5 mins) Slide #4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can a labyrinth become a personal metaphor for the spiritual journey such as Christ? • <i>Could other faiths make similar metaphorical parallels?</i> • Allow students to write for 5 mins in their journal and then discuss in pairs. • (5 mins) Share with the group. • • (10 mins) Students should write a paragraph discussing their point of view with regards to Welland and regeneration. •
10 mins.	
15 mins.	
5 mins.	
5 mins	
10 mins	
5 mins	

<p>10 mins.</p> <p>20 mins</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (5 mins) Use a marker to trace the labyrinth from the LCD projector onto 2 pieces of Bristol board • • 10 minute break • Students will walk out to the front property with water and cookies to decide on the best design. • • When arriving back, students will free write on the bristol board feelings or words they may have going into the labyrinth. • On the other piece of Bristol board, students will write words they would associate with leaving the labyrinth • The labyrinth will be surrounded with words on both pieces of Bristol board as well.
<p>15 mins.</p>	<p>Closure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal Writing • Write a paragraph to discuss how the theme of Death and Rebirth has impacted you during this session. • • What is your greatest impression or thoughts about being involved in this project? • • • Write one word that expresses the whole session • • Dismiss students.

Extension Activities:

How can you extend/enrich the learning for fast-finishers?

•

Adaptations and/or Modifications:

*Consider alternate methods/strategies to meet to same outcomes (adaptations)?
How will you modify (change) the assignment to meet the needs of students on an IEP?*

•

Assessment/Evaluation: Student Achievement

How well has the student demonstrated understanding in relation to the learning outcome(s)? How will it be measured and how will you collect the data?

•

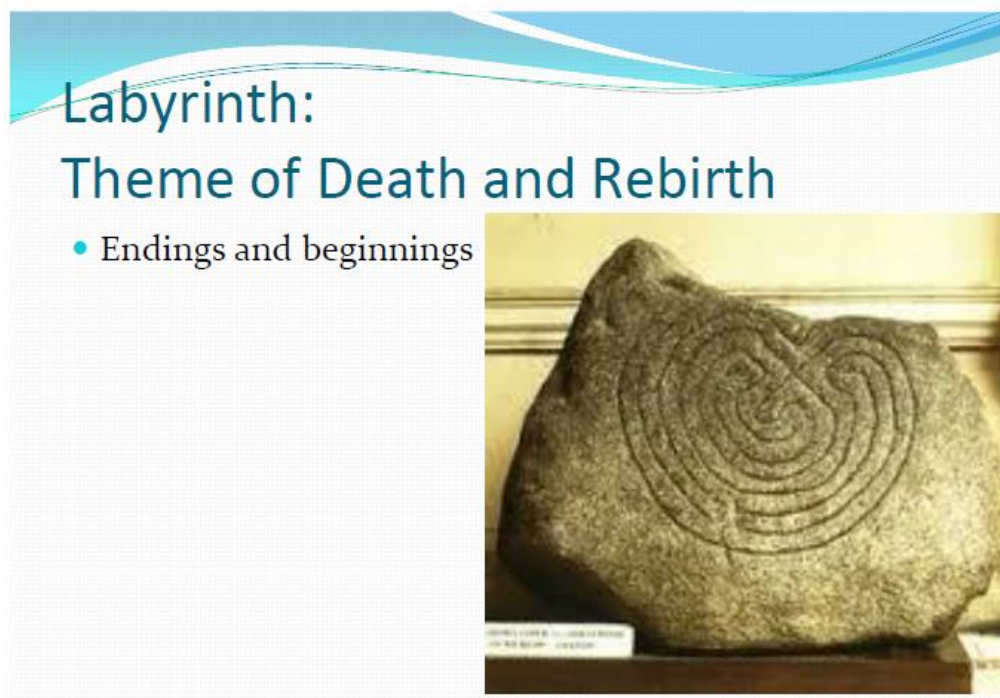
Work Ethic (Good, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement): Effort

What are the criteria for each?

G	S	N
• •	• •	• •

Appendix E

Death and Rebirth PowerPoint (Resource for Lesson)



Labyrinths: Death and Rebirth

1. Changes in attitudes
 2. Changes in lifestyle
 3. choices
 4. Milestones in life
 5. Can represent real deaths and rebirth into new life (eg. Parent dies and child walks the labyrinth as a symbol of letting go)
- Write in your journal personal Deaths and Rebirths in your life experiences



Labyrinths

- Metaphor for Christ's death
- How can a labyrinth become a personal metaphor for the spiritual journey such as Christ?
- Death of the bad and rebirth of the good in one's life

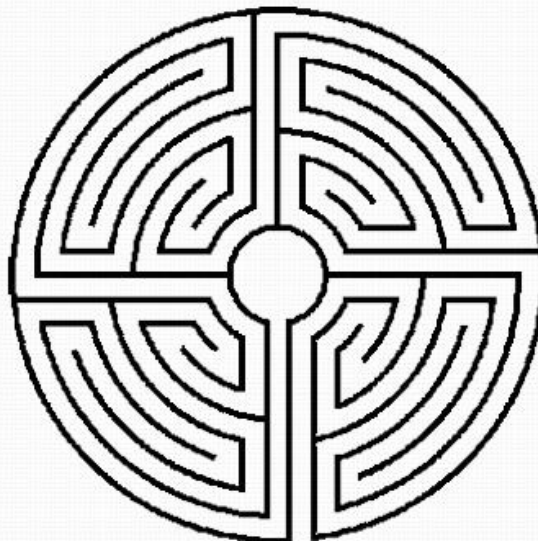


Labyrinth: Death and Rebirth

- Where in our world do we see deaths and rebirths?
- Think about regeneration; how does this theme affect your point of view of Port Draw?



Labyrinth: Death and Rebirth



Appendix F

Lesson Plan: Sacred Geometry and Golden Mean

Name: Ms. Sherilyn Lehn

Lesson 4: Literacy Labyrinth Sacred Geometry and Golden Mean

Subject: Literacy Labyrinth

Topic: Sacred and Universal Shapes and Images

Time allotment: 6 pm – 8pm

Lesson Objective:

- 1) Identifying Sacred Geometry and the influence it has on labyrinths
- 2) Identifying how Golden Mean plays an important role in labyrinths
- 3) Identifying how Math could be considered 'Sacred'

Prescribed Learning Outcome(s)—*taken directly from the IRP(s)*

It is expected that students will be able to:

-
-

Specific Learning Outcomes(s)—*refine/focus the PLO(s) into something that is specific, manageable & measurable*

SWBAT (Students will be able to):

-
-

Materials/Resources:

- LCD Projector
- Student journal/sketchbooks
- Pencils, rulers, and Bristol board
- Optional: paint, brushes, and water
-

Lesson Structure:

Time (minutes)	Lesson Development
10 mins.	<p>Introduction/Hook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In our world what is sacred? • Let students discuss their own ideas of sacredness • . • Read Thoreau pg 48 “When common man...” • From Re-Creation • By Henry Thoreau • • When common man looks into the sky, • which he has not so much profaned, he thinks • It less gross than the earth, and with reverence • Speaks of “the Heavens,” but the seer will in • the same sense speak of “the Earths,” and his • Father who is in them. • • Hand out 3 parts to a paragraph • Review the structure and then have students write their own response to this poem
10 mins. 20 mins 10 mins. 20 mins.	<p>Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • (10 Minutes) • • Teach students the sacred spiral allow students to create their own spiral • If there is time, they may paint it • . • At the end of the class, students should write and offer a response to “These Motions are everywhere in Nature...” pg 8 • . • Students should free write as an exit piece and discuss anything that comes to mind about this class • Allow students to write One Word that sums up the class
15 mins.	<p>Closure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal Writing • Written response to investigating sacredness. How did the class impact you? • . • Write one word that sums up the whole lesson for

	<p>today</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • Dismiss students.
--	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Extension Activities:

How can you extend/enrich the learning for fast-finishers?

-

Adaptations and/or Modifications:

*Consider alternate methods/strategies to meet to same outcomes (adaptations)?
How will you modify (change) the assignment to meet the needs of students on an IEP?*

-

Assessment/Evaluation: Student Achievement

How well has the student demonstrated understanding in relation to the learning outcome(s)? How will it measured and how will you collect the data?

-

Work Ethic (Good, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement): Effort

What are the criteria for each?

G	S	N
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • •

Appendix G

Exit Interview Questions

Literacy Labyrinth
Exit Interview Questions

February 6, 2016
Interviewer: Sherilyn Lehn

Interviewee: _____

1. Please describe your opinions and experiences about this project?
2. What were your favourite stages of the project? Please explain.
3. What were your least favourite stages of the project? Please explain.
4. Did you learn anything about literacy such as: reading, writing, communicating?
Please explain.
5. Did you learn anything about art?
6. Please describe how you feel about your finished painting on canvas? Describe specifically anything you were happy about or struggled with while making the art.
7. In what ways would you incorporate parts of this study /project with school work?
8. If given the opportunity to participate, would you help construct a labyrinth in an outdoor space? Please explain your reasoning.
9. After learning about labyrinths, would you want one in your neighborhood?
Would an outdoor labyrinth benefit your community? Please explain.